

Art Criticism: The Mediation of Art in
Britain 1968–76

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Abstract

This thesis studies the changes in the nature of critical writing on contemporary art, in the context of the British art world across a period from 1968 to around 1976. It examines the major shifts in the relationship between the artistic production of the period and the forms of writing that addressed it, through those publications that sought to articulate a public discourse on art in a period where divergent accounts regarding the criteria of artistic value, and the terms of critical discourse, came increasingly into conflict.

This thesis takes as its main subject a number of publication venues for art-critical writing of the time, and their responses to the rapidly changing scene of artistic production. It examines the forms of writing that attended emerging artistic practice and the theoretical and critical assumptions on which that writing depended, highlighting those moments where critical discourse was provoked to reflect self-consciously of the relation between discourse and artistic practice.

By tracing the repercussions of the cultural and political revolts of the late 1960s, it examines how the orthodoxies of art criticism came to be challenged, in the first instance, by the growing influence of radical artistic practices which incorporated a discursive function, and by leftist social critiques of art. It explores how, in the first half of the 1970s, radical and political artistic practice was promoted by a number of young critics, and sanctioned by its presentation in public art venues.

Examining the history of magazines such as *Studio International* and a number of smaller specialist and non-specialist magazines such as the feminist *Spare Rib* and the left-wing independent press, it attends to how debates over the cultural and social agency of art began to draw on continental theoretical influences that put into greater question the role of subjective experience and the nature of the human subject. It examines how this shift in the relation between practice and discourse manifested itself in the editorial and critical attitudes of publications both from within the field of artistic culture, and from a wider context of publications embedded in the radical political and social currents of the early 1970s. It gives particular attention to the careers of a number of prominent critics, while situating the later reaction against alternative artistic practices in the context of the politically conservative turn of the end of the decade.

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Chapter 1. Towards the New Art: Studio International, 1968-1970	44
Chapter 2. Art criticism and the alternative press 1971-73	81
Chapter 3. Looking for the subject: Peter Fuller and the new critics, 1970-76	115
Chapter 4. Young Conservatives: from ONE to Artscribe, 1973 - 1976.....	146
Conclusion.....	175
Bibliography.....	180

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Author's Declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature:

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Introduction

When I returned to London in 1977, after a year spent living in New York, I was asked to speak at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in the context of a three-day conference on the 'State of British Art'; I was told that the conference was to be a response to the crisis in British Art... I never did learn what the 'crisis in British Art' was; nor, I suspect, did anyone else. In retrospect, some ten years on, I now see the ICA event, the brainchild of three British art critics, as a textbook example of what psycho-analysis terms projection: the crisis sensed by these critics was not in 'art' but in criticism itself.¹

This thesis takes as its subject the culture of art criticism in Britain during the period 1968–76. It makes an account of the history of a range of publications that emerged, failed and succeeded during the 1970s. Through the example of those publications and the writers who contributed to them, it examines the theoretical frameworks and cultural assumptions that underpinned the production of these publications and the critical writing that went into them, and sets these developments in relation to a number of important changing contexts: the history of Britain during a decade of political, cultural and economic crisis; the cultural and social changes set in motion by the radical events of the last years of the 1960s; and the assimilation of theoretical developments occurring both within Britain, as well as those coming from the United States and Europe.

While the decade has become the subject of growing historical study, much of that has, perhaps understandably, focussed first on the artistic practices of the period. Since the end of the 1990s, artists who had established themselves in the 1970s, but who had become marginal in art-historical accounts of the period, became the subject of more sustained interest. Simon Ford's 1999 *Wreckers of Civilisation*, made a historical return to the controversial performance art group COUM

¹ Victor Burgin, 'The End of Art Theory', in *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 140–204 (p. 140).

Transmissions.² The Whitechapel Gallery's 2000 *Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment 1965-75* was an early survey of the heterogeneous range of conceptualist, performance, film and sculptural activities that took shape across the turn of the decade.³ John A Walker's historical survey of radical and left-wing artistic currents during the 1970s was published in 2002.⁴ A notable aspect of research on the art of the period has been the volume of research presented as exhibition, rather than publication. The death of John Latham in 2006, and the establishment of his home, FlatTime House, as a study centre, has been a catalyst for publication of research around his work; the Artist Placement Group (co-founded by Latham) was the subject of a significant exhibition at Raven Row in London in 2012;⁵ the broader field of sculptural activity in Britain in the 1970s has been represented by historical exhibitions of the Systems group and the Henry Moore Institute's larger 2012 research project *United Enemies*.⁶ And notable among this form of exhibition-based research is the programme of exhibitions staged at the Chelsea College of Art's exhibition space (among these *Dematerialised: Jack Wendler Gallery 1971 to 1974*, curated by Teresa Gleadowe, and historical retrospectives of work by Bruce McLean, Stephen Willatts and Shelagh Cluet, all curated by Donald Smith).

However little work exists on the specific history of art publications during the same period. Jo Melvin's doctoral thesis and research stands as an exception, her thesis drawing on Charles Harrison's archives and interviews with him to examine in depth the editorial history and culture of *Studio International*,⁷ and which has also provided the basis for a retrospective exhibition of works by artists featured in the magazine.⁸ What other attention to art publications of the period exists has tended to be both American in focus (for example Amy Newman's book on the

² Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London: Black Dog Publishing Ltd, 1999).

³ Clive Phillpot, *Live in Your Head : Concept and Experiment in Britain, 1965-75 / Clive Phillpot and Andrea Tarsia ; with Additional Essays by Michael Archer, Rosetta Brooks* (London: London : Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2000).

⁴ John A. Walker, *Left Shift : Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

⁵ 'The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966-79', Raven Row, London, 27 September – 16 December 2012

⁶ See *A Rational Aesthetic: The Systems Group and Associated Artists* (Southampton England: Southampton City Art Gallery, 2008); Henry Moore Institute, *United Enemies: The Problem of Sculpture in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s*. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2012).

⁷ Jo Melvin, 'Studio International Magazine: Tales from Peter Townsend's Editorial Papers 1965-1975' (University College London, 2013).

⁸ 'Five Issues of Studio International', curated by Jo Melvin; Raven Row, London, 26 February – 3 May 2015

history of *Artforum*⁹) while also principally attending to the to the artist-made publication, such as Lisa Le Feuvre's exhibition on *Avalanche* magazine,¹⁰ or Gwen Allen's extensive survey of American publications, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art*.¹¹

Indeed, the attention paid to the artist's magazine has tended to eclipse the history of published art criticism. This is an important methodological question for this research, since the issue of who writes about the art of the moment – the artist or the critic – is itself a lively dispute between artists and critics at the turn of the 1970s. The emphasis on artist's publications in current research, especially with regards to the particular form of the artist's interview (whose exemplars would be the American *Avalanche* and Andy Warhol's *Interview*, and in Britain, William Furlong's *Audio Arts*), therefore already privileges a particular aspect of the mediation of art – that of the artist's self-representation, supposedly unmediated by the institutional ambit of art criticism or the intervention of the critic. This tendency was of course an important aspect of how artists in the late 1960s and 1970s sought to establish the legitimacy of their activities, and their independence from what they saw as the sclerosis of modernist criticism as it had become established in the venues of art criticism.¹² Yet the emphasis on this aspect of artist's self-representation in print in current scholarship tends to obscure the way in which artists were also involved in writing art criticism for journals and magazines, and the way in which artists negotiated publishing criticism of others while being the subject of published criticism themselves.¹³

The uneasy tension which invariably exists when artists write criticism of their peers points to a central question for this thesis – that of the intermediary and mediating function of writing about art for a readership, and how interpretation

⁹ Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974* (New York, N.Y.: Soho Press, 2003).

¹⁰ *Avalanche 1970 -1976*, curated by Lisa Le Feuvre; Chelsea Space, London, 11 June – 23 July 2005

¹¹ Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011); Gwen Allen, 'Against Criticism: The Artist Interview in "Avalanche" Magazine, 1970-76', *Art Journal*, 64.3 (2005), 50–61 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/20068400>>.

¹² See for example Dan Flavin, 'Several More Remarks..', *Studio International*, April 1969, 173–75; Donald Judd 1928-1994, 'Complaints Part I', *Studio International*, April 1969, 182–88.

¹³ See for example Patrick Heron, 'Ascendancy of London in the Sixties', *Studio International*, December 1966, 280–81; Patrick Heron, 'A Kind of Cultural Imperialism?', *Studio International*, February 1968, 62–64; Patrick Heron, 'Two Cultures: British and American Contemporary Art', *Studio International*, December 1970, 240–48; Patrick Heron, 'Americanism, pro-and Anti-', *Studio International*, October 1971, 123–24.

and evaluation regulates the way the meaning and value of artworks are negotiated against the interests and investments of a public of artists and non-artists. It also highlights how the interpretative and evaluative activity of criticism is not an abstractly theoretical issue regarding the interaction of visuality, experience and language, but is materially implicated in the institutional economies and cultural politics that sustain and regulate the production of art in its wider social context. It furthermore poses the very real issue of how individuals take and up and reproduce the professional demarcations and exclusions assigned to artists and critics, since by taking on the role critics, artists or others become implicated in a division of institutional power which exists beyond the more apparently convivial practice of individuals commenting on the work of their peers. That is to say that while the activity of mediation may have a generic character – negotiating the differences between subjects in their experience of artworks – it is also integrally bound up with the reality of institutional power, which is socially, culturally and historically specific. All the publications studied here cover art from the perspective of the writer as intermediary, reporter and critic of contemporary work, rather than as the artistic originator of it. (Though, as discussed in Ch.1 in the case of *Studio International*, the possibility of the artist writing about their own work – rather than writing as a critic of the work of others – became a contested issue for the magazine.)

This thesis therefore examines what is written about art on the assumption that the site of its publication is of critical importance. It examines case histories of very different kinds of publications, whose relationship to writing on art is modulated by varying commitments, whether these are the support of innovative practices, the defence of established ones, the contextualisation of current practice through the lens of new critical perspectives, or the defensive entrenchment of more established approaches, while wider political and cultural conditions are never far away. Each case presents a distinct configuration of the way in which theoretical and critical positions are articulated and disseminated, dependent on contrasting institutional, cultural and editorial conditions. What emerges is a constellation of links and associations between writers and between publications, often working through and across different magazine platforms in close historical parallel.

The definition of art criticism offered here is complicated: it is understood, not as the coherent mediation of artworks for a homogenous public by a unified and self-contained critical discourse, but as a practice of mediation of different disciplines of

knowledge and of public constituencies, each of which make a claim on the meaning and significance of visual art, and each of which resort to the practice, production and distribution of forms of critical writing to assert those claims. Art criticism is therefore not intelligible as a critical practice divorced or abstracted from the material forms and distributive economies in which it takes place; it is always both the production and the occupation of a site of discourse. The history of art criticism in Britain is in this thesis understood as the history of publications through which critical ideas are formed and readerships constituted.

Methodologically, while this thesis pays close attention to the material of each publication as a starting point, it does so to survey the intellectual and critical positions that are evident, and to make an account of their sources; in many instances, critics and artists make appeal to the authority of intellectual or critical sources that lie elsewhere. Each chapter deals with a different set of such connections, to offer a close reading of those artistic, cultural and intellectual resources that animated artists and critics at the time. That many of these positions now appear dated and alien to contemporary critical approaches only serves to show how distant, culturally and historically, the art of the early 1970s now is.

However, an important preoccupation of this research has been to try to avoid reconfirming the legitimacy of those theoretical and critical tropes that emerged in the period under study, and which came to be decisively influential in the quarter century that followed. As I outline below, part of the initial motivation for this research was the recognition that a particular trajectory of art theory's relation to art criticism had, by the early 2000s, become aware of its own limitations; and that by looking back to the moment of its origin might offer valuable insights into the cultural and intellectual drivers which first set that in motion.

In this sense, I attempt throughout this thesis to pay close attention to the particular and varying strands of critical thinking that are brought to the artworks under discussion, even when (and perhaps especially when) these approaches now appear now to be failed, redundant or obsolete. Much recent art-historical work on the art of the 1970s has tended to focus on and to reconfirm those strands of post-minimalist, conceptual and inter-media practices that have become canonical in the intervening decades. To return to original sources of art *criticism*, however, is to return to the initial contingencies of critical articulation and reception of the

different and – at the time – competing forms of artistic practice which shared the space of public attention for contemporary art.

Part of the attention to artistic practices and attendant critical discourses that have become excluded from the historical canon is a consequence of the priority given in this study to the publication as the primary source for research. The selection examined here is of those publications that attended to contemporary artistic production, whether this was their core editorial remit as a specialist art publication, or as one aspect of a wider, non-specialist editorial attention to the arts in general, or to artistic practice in relation to a specific political agenda or project. This selection is not exhaustive, and given the range of the historical archive of publications, certain significant publications with extensive publication histories have been examined only partially. In each case the publication is one that demonstrates the intention to address a relatively broad readership, one understood to exist beyond the smaller community of artists from which the work originated. In this sense, all the publications studied appealed, in one form or other, to a more general notion of an interested public. It is this attempt to address a public that constitutes these publications as venues for art criticism and for the activity of the critic.

Such an approach to publication history therefore offers a sort of cultural history of art criticism in the context of British society during the 1970s, and in the context of wider intellectual developments occurring outside of the established institutional and disciplinary spaces of artist production, but which came to exert an influence on it. Paying close attention to the content of publications reveals larger and more complex intellectual edifices not directly associated with the traditional terms and culture of art criticism. Surveying the practice of criticism at the point at which the assumptions underpinning its institutional rationale were thrown into question by artists, while the orthodoxies of aesthetic and art-historical theory were put under pressure by critical developments in political theory and the social sciences, presents a doubly complex problem for art criticism – how to retain its legitimacy within the ‘division of labour’ of the institutional economy of art, at a time when the spectrum of interpretative discourse appeared to make the consolidation of a coherent discursive position within that economy impossible. It is my contention that this problem has so far remained difficult to resolve, a problem visible in the continued disconnection between the practice of theory and the practice of criticism. Therefore, before returning to a discussion of the wider intellectual and

social contexts relevant to the historical period of the study, it is worth broaching some of historical consequences of this rift, experienced in the contemporary period as the 'crisis of criticism'.

On the origins of the 'crisis of art criticism'

Victor Burgin's reminiscence of the world of British art and art criticism of the mid-1970s which opens this introduction, looks back from the vantage point of the mid-1980s, to describe a moment in which art continued to function, yet while a practice called 'art criticism' found itself unable to continue on its earlier terms. Art criticism, it would seem, has been in trouble ever since. The motivation for this thesis grew out of my own experiences as a writer beginning to work as freelance critic in London at the turn of the 2000s. At that time, while opportunities for writing were at the time expanding, due in part to a boom in new magazines and the re-launching of existing ones to focus on the growing cultural popularity of contemporary art, questions of art criticism's institutional identity and cultural purpose were coming under renewed scrutiny. The first years of the decade saw a body of academic and non-academic critical literature appear in the USA and in the UK, preoccupied with the supposedly problematic status and situation of art criticism. Characteristic of these texts was the common concern that art criticism found itself in crisis. 'Never has it been more difficult to practice art criticism', declared George Baker in an *October* magazine round-table on the 'The Present Conditions of Art Criticism', reaching immediately for the term 'crisis' and quoting Paul de Man's 1967 essay 'The Crisis of Contemporary Criticism'.¹⁴

That issue of *October* appeared under the rubric of 'obsolescence', and it was clear that in part, the recognition of crisis was underpinned by a sense of historical and generational impasse; that the type of criticism which had established itself a quarter century earlier – the theoretically engaged and politically conscious critical writing on art established that a journal such as *October* had become emblematic of – appeared to be finding itself marginalised by a more depoliticised and privatised forms of art critical writing. For *October's* editors:

¹⁴ George Baker and others, 'Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism', *October*, 100 (2002), 200–228 (p. 200).

As *October* approached its 100th issue, what struck us was the possible obsolescence of our original project – to raise the level of the discourse of art criticism – overtaken by sound-bite-level media.¹⁵

At the turn of the millennium, crisis and dysfunction in art criticism appeared tied to institutional change driven by a resurgence of the market, and of a new form of depoliticised, populist attention to contemporary art. The editors of *October* were not the only ones to sense the problem of critical obsolescence as a kind of crisis. While their anxieties turned on what appeared to be the threat to their own more complex, systematised and rigorous criticism grounded on a commitment to theoretical depth from the depredations of trivialised culture of journalistic commentary,¹⁶ others saw this growth of this market as threatening, *by its own success*, the value and purpose of the criticism produced by this economy. So, academic James Elkins could open his 2003 pamphlet *What Happened to Art Criticism?* with the assertion that ‘Art criticism is in worldwide crisis’, arguing that:

...its decay is not the ordinary last faint push of a practice that has run its course, because at the very same time, art criticism is also healthier than ever... So healthy that it is outstripping its readers – there is more of it around than anyone can read.¹⁷

And yet:

...at the same time, art criticism is very nearly dead, if health is measured by the number of people who take it seriously, or by its interaction with neighbouring kinds of writing such as art history, art education, or aesthetics. Art criticism is massively produced, and massively ignored.¹⁸

With the expansion of contemporary art’s institutions, markets and public attention, the question of the role of contemporary art criticism had produced a renewed discussion of criticism’s legitimate competences, a discussion that would draw, progressively, back to previous historical examples and conditions of art

¹⁵ ‘Introduction’, *October*, 100 (2002), 3–5.

¹⁶ In its inaugural issue, *October*’s editors declared that: ‘*October*’s structure and policy are predicated upon a dominant concern: the renewal and strengthening of critical discourse through intensive review of the methodological options now available. *October*’s strong theoretical emphasis will be mediated by its consideration of present artistic practice.’ See ‘About *October*’, *October*, 1 (1976), 3–5.

¹⁷ James Elkins, *What Happened to Art Criticism?* (Chicago, Ill: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), pp. 2–4.

¹⁸ Elkins, p. 4.

criticism to attempt to explain its current opportunities and limitations. In his 1999 book *High Art Lite*, Julian Stallabrass had noted the ‘phenomenon much remarked upon and little analysed: the decline of serious art criticism’:

Consider, to begin with, that (in contrast to academic art theory) there are no longer any British art critics who have a credible intellectual presence both *within and without the art world*, whose writing is seen as important for the culture as a whole: whatever one might think about their views, critics of previous decades such as Roger Fry, Herbert Read, Adrian Stokes, John Berger and even Peter Fuller did have such scope.¹⁹

Stallabrass’s distinction between ‘academic art theory’ and criticism for a public is a key issue for this thesis. Stallabrass’s discussion of the decline of art criticism, in the context of its focus on the rise of the ‘young British artists’ of the 1990s, offers its own historical diagnosis of the problem, going back to the 1980s, where the rise of Thatcherite free-market culture would be the driver of the trivialisation of art’s place in the cultural life of society:

The shift from seeing art as an integral part of an intellectual culture which also involved politics, philosophy, music, literature and the sciences, to one that sees it as a lifestyle issue, a complement to an interest in furnishings and floor coverings, is a profound one.²⁰

As this thesis explores, the uncertainty of the role of criticism in recent debates has historical roots, which the expansion of the market for criticism paradoxically exposed. Yet the problems facing art criticism in the twenty-first century cannot, I would argue, be located solely in reference to the economic and cultural transformations in contemporary art of the 1990s. The significant split that Stallabrass identifies – between art theory and art criticism – is rather the precondition that informs both the sentiments of redundancy in discussions of the effect of commercial and ‘popular’ forms of art criticism, and the sense of impasse and terminus in debates among those concerned with a more theoretically grounded, yet institutionally circumscribed ‘academic’ criticism. The emergence of a split between ‘academic’ art theory and a more publicly oriented art criticism has

¹⁹ Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* (Verso, 1999), p. 259. My emphasis.

²⁰ Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p. 270.

a longer history, and the question of how far the 'crisis of criticism' in fact extended, historically, is the focus of this research.

The distinction is important because recent debates in British and American contexts over a supposed 'crisis of criticism' have insufficiently distinguished between a professional crisis of art criticism (a situational problem regarding markets, commercial economies of publication, the shift in audience for contemporary art due to its incorporation, as Stallabrass suggests, into an extended form of consumer culture) from a theoretical discussion about the problematic character of criticism. This has resulted in a tendency to theorise what could be termed an 'ethics' of critical responsibility for art criticism, but from within the circumscribed limits of a professional model of art criticism and, by implication, from the re-staged vantage point of the art critic as *figure*.²¹ This troubled debate, while cautious not to return the figure of the critic to his earlier position of monopolistic cultural authority, nevertheless cannot help but return to problems that had been previously authorised and licensed by the critic's presence, by turning what previously had been assumptions into questions: a question of whether art (and society) still requires a practice of criticism and evaluative judgement; on what epistemological grounds this practice should be based; and the relationship between epistemology and the politics of knowledge inherent in the interaction between culture and society.

The issue of the extent of criticism's responsibilities and authority, and its relationship both to a wider theoretical scope and a politics of culture, became the focus of a spate of polemical articles in the British *Art Monthly* in 2003. Again, the division that emerged was between the merits of an 'academic' criticism and a more immanent criticism which, while supposedly closer to the work, would necessarily be more distant from the demands of both theory and politics. So Alex Coles could frame the distinction as that between the 'bathroom critic' and the 'critic of the study', along the way attacking the *October* roundtable contributors for their disapproval of 'bellettristic' writing in favour of the 'critical'. For Coles:

²¹ See for example Ronan McDonald, *The Death of the Critic* (London ; New York, NY: Continuum, 2007); Noel Carroll, *On Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2009).

... the difference turns on how the critic relates to the artwork through the texture and tenor of their prose. While the bathroom critic shuffles in parallax with the work, the critic of the study just stands still in front of it.²²

And again, the division had a history:

... criticism moved along two distinct roads in the mid-80s. The high road led to its academicisation. In the UK this was broached through the philosophical turn of the late 80s. By interpreting the work through another text the philosopher-critic was released from a direct confrontation with it and consequently spared the uncertainty of the contemporary; those critics mourning the demise of practices of negation today merely partake in the same process. The low road ended in sloppy journalism... Either way, ensuring something of the gist of the artwork finds its way into the register of the writing has become increasingly rare.²³

For Coles, and for others writing in response, demands made *of* the art by some other position were less legitimate than a critical responsibility to write in with a sense of proximity and analogy to the experience of the work. So for Michael Archer, dismissing the idea of a 'crisis in art':

There is no crisis. What is there is what needs to be looked at. It can't be pushed away pending the appearance of something more wholesome and palatable. If it fails to meet expectations, there's an even chance that it's the expectations that are misplaced.²⁴

Archer's lambasting of the 'nostalgic opinion that art's proper business is to be a counter-cultural gesture made from a position of unassailable rectitude'²⁵ was indicative of a sense of the failure of both art and criticism which sought to position itself in relation to bigger theoretical and political perspectives; or as Matthew Arnatt put it in a later contribution to the discussion, the 'eruptive, hormonal denouncing of contemporary art and criticism linked to the demand for change'.²⁶ In this, these writers were in conflict with those who continued to insist on a more disruptive notion of criticism, in which both artworks and the broader culture of

²² Alex Coles, 'The Bathroom Critic', *Art Monthly*, February 2003, pp. 7–10 (p. 8).

²³ Coles, p. 9.

²⁴ Michael Archer, 'Crisis What Crisis?', *Art Monthly*, March 2003, pp. 1–4 (p. 4).

²⁵ Archer, p. 2.

²⁶ Matthew Arnatt, 'The Middle Distance', *Art Monthly*, April 2003, pp. 43–43.

art might be held to account according to wider commitments grounded in political and historical analysis.²⁷

Such debates showed up, by then, the weakening authority of a criticism that made demands on the basis of a more systematic theory or political agenda, and a concomitant desire to retrieve a form of criticism that drew legitimacy from its attention to the particularities of artworks. So the ambivalence towards criticism's relationship to its object, its readership and to a broader intellectual (and eventually political) culture, has its roots in a historical juncture prior to the commercial revival of the 1990s, and reaches back through the 1980s to the 1970s. It is in this period that art criticism, as an institutional form, is faced with a substantial challenge to its purpose and function, while it is also the moment at which what Stallabrass terms 'the culture as a whole' – the idea of a national public addressed by art critics as such – fractures and comes apart. It is also in this decade that artists begin to lay claim to theoretical resources that stand outside of the narrow tradition of formalist criticism as sources of authority for their work, and do so as an *explicit gesture* of externalisation (calling upon external theoretical resources, often in the social sciences) rather than participating in the direct generation of theoretical or polemical discourses *internally* – as might be evidenced by the modernist form of the aesthetic manifesto.

The difficulty of – or reluctance towards –discharging greater theoretical, philosophical or political responsibilities stalks these discussions of the 'crisis of criticism'. The sense that such greater commitments have somehow become incorporated into contemporary art's professional system is implied in the denigration of 'academic art theory'. The suggestion of a crisis in art criticism, then, pre-dates the rise of the art market and expanded audience for art that Elkins and Stallabrass identify, and – if the British discussion outlined above is representative – has something to do with the problem of how artworks are mediated by intellectual and cultural contexts existing beyond the immediate sphere of artistic practice. Crucially, however, this is a question of the institutional character of those contexts.

²⁷ See Rasheed Araeen, 'Crisis What Crisis?', *Art Monthly*, April 2003, pp. 12–13; Peter Suchin, 'The Critic Never Sleeps', *Art Monthly*, May 2003, pp. 41–41; J. J. Charlesworth, 'The Dysfunction of Criticism', *Art Monthly*, September 2003, pp. 1–4.

Criticism and the institutionalisation of judgement

In an essay first published in 1990, Michael Newman opens by suggesting that 'If there is a crisis in art criticism, it would seem tempting to turn to philosophy for a solution', a remedy Newman however goes on to warn against. As Newman observes, 'One merely has to peruse most of the art journals and magazines to see that the quality and rigor of art criticism has declined dramatically since the mid-1980s, if not before. Why has this occurred?'²⁸

Newman finds the roots of the decline of criticism in the paradigmatic shift that occurred in artistic practice at the turn of the 1970s:

... one of the reasons for the problem of criticism today is its redundancy when changes in art practice, notably Conceptual art, displaced criticism from its role in relation to the avant-garde by incorporating critique – including the critique of a descriptive objectifying epistemology – into the practice itself: art theory replaces art criticism as the appropriate way of mediating the practice, and is often carried out by the artists themselves.²⁹

The displacement of criticism is here posed as the result of the reassimilation or reintegration of critical and theoretical work by artists. Yet the incorporation of a 'critique of a descriptive objectifying epistemology' begs the question of who authorizes or legislates that critique. Especially in the case of meta-critical claims made by artists, the incorporation of critiques of the dominant epistemology into specific artistic practices poses the problem of whether those practices claim exemplary status (such as in the case of the publication of Joseph Kosuth's essay 'Art after Philosophy' in *Studio International*, discussed in Ch.1). With the exemplary artwork or practice, the incorporation of critique into artistic practice is therefore still subject to the problem of how authority is divided between artist, critic and public, and inevitably points us back to the problem of institutional power, regardless of the claims made by artists for particular artistic practices. (Indicative of this is the critic's difficulty in mediating the authority claims of certain artistic practices with their responsibility to represent the interests of their readership, as becomes evident in the discussion of the 'new critics' in Ch.3.)

²⁸ Michael Newman, 'The Specificity of Art Criticism and Its Need for Philosophy', in *The State of Art Criticism*, ed. by James Elkins and Michael Newman (Routledge: New York, 2008), pp. 29–60 (p. 30).

²⁹ Michael Newman, p. 30.

Writing in 1990, Newman's reflections on the period of decline of criticism caution against the possibility of a 'return to philosophy' as a resolution to criticism's crisis, since, following Adorno's theorisation of the 'culture industry', Newman argues that criticism is subject to the same forces of commodification that affect contemporary art:

Criticism, even if it involves critique, contributes in its role as mediation with the public to the extension of the culture industry, which comes to include modernism, the avant-garde, and the institution of criticism itself.³⁰

Newman continues:

To suggest, then, that a turn to philosophy is somehow going to resolve this crisis is to forget the latter's history, which has taken the form of repeated turns to theory or to philosophy as a way of attempting to redeem art from reification.³¹

If a renewal of criticism by turns to a greater authority of philosophy only succeeds in incorporating this authority into the functioning of the culture industry, then the problem the editors of *October* would encounter a decade later in analysing the historical predicament of their own project would appear not to be resolvable merely in terms of 'the renewal and strengthening of critical discourse through intensive review of the methodological options now available'.³² In opposition, Newman insists on the 'specificity of art criticism as distinct from art theory',³³ identifying the crisis in art criticism as linked to the 'occlusion of the question of judgement'.³⁴ As he argues, it is judgement's conflation with a discredited notion of 'taste' (represented principally in post-war modernist criticism by the American critic Clement Greenberg) that throws the question of judgement into crisis from the late 1960s onwards. Newman's discussion of the historical and philosophical distinction of taste and judgement returns to its origins in Kant; and through that, brings into view the shifting question of the public sphere. In Newman's discussion of Kant, claims of judgement are different to claims of taste, seeking their legitimacy and authority not simply in criteria imposed from above by reason, or by recourse to an unverifiable private assertion of 'taste', but through reflection on

³⁰ Michael Newman, p. 33.

³¹ Michael Newman, p. 34.

³² 'About October'.

³³ Michael Newman, p. 34.

³⁴ Michael Newman, p. 34.

artworks which are however not merely private, but potential available to other subjects. As Newman suggests, returning to the question of judgement connects the discussion of particular artworks and practices to an eventually social and political dimension:

The implication of this for our problem is the claim for the possibility of an art criticism as a form of judgement which, on one hand, is not reducible to merely contingent judgments of taste, and on the other, no subsumable by theory. From Kant's thinking on the art of judgment we may be able to derive a model for the political as neither the centrally planned (*Polizei*) state, nor liberalism (which still remains depended on an irrational idea of providence).³⁵

The consequences of such a formulation of the notion of judgement, taken as constituted by a practice of reflection that transcends the individual subject, leads to the question of how that inter-subjective activity takes concrete and historical shape. A major aspect of this study's examination of the predicament of the critic and of art criticism in the period is the interaction between cultural and institutional conditions that destabilise the discursive hierarchy between artist and critic. Burgin, writing in the mid-1980s could succinctly caricature this historical division:

...the very opposition 'critic'/'artist' is itself *the* major statement in the art-critical discursive institution. In this relation, the subjective site 'artist' is that of 'the visual', a site of silence and intuition, of transcendent Spirit, but also the place of the supplicant before History; the subjective site 'critic' is that of 'the verbal', a site of speech and intellect of transcendent Reason, and the judgement seat of History.³⁶

Burgin's arguments, by then strongly influenced by post-structuralist critiques of discourse, subjectivity and the legacy of the Enlightenment, however close out any possibility of a negotiation of critical judgements among active subjects in a given historical and social context. Echoing Barthes, the passage to post-structuralist criticism is that:

³⁵ Michael Newman, p. 41.

³⁶ Burgin, 'The End of Art Theory', p. 200.

... from a view of criticism as an operation performed by a self-possessed subject upon a discrete and distanced object, to a view of criticism as an act of *reading*, imbricating, implicating a divided and unstable subject in the multiple instabilities of a text which continually opens onto other texts.³⁷

As I explore further in Ch.2 in relation to the turn to psychoanalysis in both film criticism and art criticism in the radical press of the early 1970s, one of the key aspects of the turn to theory in the period was the reception of French post-structuralism, where Roland Barthes's semiology, Louis Althusser's Marxist theorisation of ideology and subjectivity and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory were beginning to appear in their first English translations, though their dissemination was not immediate. (For example, Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero* and *Elements of Semiology* had appeared in English in 1967; Althusser's *For Marx* had appeared in 1969; Lacan's *Ecrits* only in 1972.³⁸) Ideas which had been developed throughout the late 1950s and 1960s in France, but barely accessible to English readerships before 1968, were rapidly taken up in the early 1970s, and brought together to support a critique of the mass media, art and subjectivity that responded to the political demands of the moment, as artists searched for a different approach to the critical power of artworks, and as feminist artists in particular looked to Lacan for a more radical and fundamental critique of the bases subjectivity and gender.

What is distinct in in Burgin's claim to post-structuralism's reformulation of criticism is of course the unstable status of the *subject*. The problem for such post-structuralist-inspired interpretations of the subject's instability is, it could be argued, whether the subject's instability is *constitutive* or *contingent*. In that sense, a conception of the subject as constituted by language, places the subject in a problematically passive relationship to the source of its own instability, in contrast to a conception of the subject as unstable due to the contingencies of historical and social circumstances. This latter perspective on the subject would require some concept of *agency* and *autonomy*, and the practice of judgement (regardless of which criteria it might base itself on), then, presupposes a degree of autonomy on the part of subjects both self-possessed and distanced from their object.

³⁷ Burgin, 'The End of Art Theory', p. 199.

³⁸ Louis Althusser, *For Marx*. (Translated by Ben Brewster.). (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969., 1969).

This is not to deny the assimilation of subjects – artists, critics – into the process of reproduction of the institutionalised discourses of art, but rather to observe that some form of agency is necessary in order to both reproduce conventional discourse as well as to challenge it. But critically, the practice of judgement must require some concept of the ‘interestedness’ of the subject – that is to say, some sense in which subjects prosecute their interests (understood as governed by necessity, and not purely arbitrary). One of the issues for the emerging influence of post-structuralist approaches to the subject in the early 1970s is the problem of the critic’s *objectification of other subjects*. If Jacques Lacan’s theory of the unconscious and Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology tended to delegitimise subjectivity as an ‘effect’ of language, discourse or ideology, the object of criticism becomes, in effect, the incapacity *of other people to criticise*. When Burgin writes disparagingly of the falsely timeless ‘scene’ of criticism (‘... the artist creating, by force of his or her very nature, the critic naturally assuming the judgement seat, by force of a special ‘sensibility’; the audience, naturally, *attentive to both*,’³⁹), it is to aggressively demote the possibility which Newman points to – that of an active participation of critical deliberation of subjective experience *collectively*.

Art history and the diversification of critical authority

In the historical context of this thesis, the destabilisation of previous forms of mediation of subjective interest with the contingencies of social and historical reality produces the dynamic in which art criticism attempts, continuously, to reposition itself. As the following chapters survey, the mediative character of criticism is that of the mediation of theoretical, cultural and political commitments and expectations of various publics with those of artists and artistic production. A distinction here is made between homogenous and heterogeneous mediations: for example, the mediation between the discourse of art history as it was then configured as an academic discipline and contemporary artistic practice, in contrast to a more complex and fragmented mediation of competing explanatory discourses and diverse publics. As becomes apparent, some of these cultural constituencies are aligned counter to mainstream culture and society, while others are rooted in the radical politics of the period, and others are embedded in the preoccupations of the professional artistic community. In each case, we find critics

³⁹ Burgin, ‘The End of Art Theory’, p. 142.

attempting to negotiate their own relationship to artistic practice and public through their own particular commitments to different critical discourses. What becomes apparent is how criticism's unstable situation as mediation is produced by the loss of legitimacy of particular previously dominant discursive authorities, while this is combined with the agitation against the institutional practice of criticism (or the power of critics) by artists and their supporters.

So, for example, if the professional role of the art critic had, until the late 1960s, been based on a practice of judgment generated by a relationship with history, this had required a stable dynamic between the professional institutions of criticism, the self-imposed discursive parameters of artistic practitioners, and the institutionalised forms of historical knowledge. Asked by Edward Lucie-Smith in 1968 for a definition of the 'avant-garde', Greenberg asserts: "You don't define it, you recognise it as a historical phenomenon."⁴⁰ Greenberg's implicit aversion to taking responsibility for the act of recognition, preferring rather to see himself as a sort of passive, objective conduit for the Truth of History', insulates the critic from any call to account for his own judgements, while installing the concept of art history as a legislative or authoritative discourse. Greenberg's historicism was not unique, of course, though he remained stubbornly attached to it. In the British context, expressions of uncertainty regarding the purpose of criticism would become more evident among those who had hitherto understood criticism as the practical adjunct of the discipline of art history. Those most influential approaches to both criticism and art history were similarly preoccupied with an attention to the formal aspects of art and to rigorous historical objectivity: besides the relatively narrow and specialist influence of the American Greenberg, in the British context, the pre-war formalism of Roger Fry and Clive Bell still had influence. Meanwhile, art historical study was indebted to the rigorous and empirical formal attention of approach of the generation of historians associated with 'Vienna School formalism', which had strong links with the Courtauld Institute and Aby Warburg's Warburg Institute. So the art historian Quentin Bell (son of Clive Bell), in his 1973 annual lecture at Cambridge, could bemoan the conditions that confront the contemporary art critic:

The familiar theme and the comprehensible anecdote have ceased to interest painters or sculptors. The critic finds himself called upon to assess

⁴⁰ Edward Lucie-Smith, 'Interview with Clement Greenberg', *Studio International*, January 1968, 4-5 (p. 5).

a framed rectangle of virgin wall paper, a plastic soap dish, looking like any other product of the same factory but sanctified by the laying on of expensive hands, the ritual electrocution of live goldfish.⁴¹

For Bell, the criteria by which to assess such works were clearly no longer available, since detached from any cohering trajectory of historical continuity. Bell's unremarkable lecture rehearses a traditional distinction between history (facts) and criticism (opinions), while lamenting that there were no longer any great critics. (Bell raises another familiar complaint: that technologies of visual dissemination such as colour reproductions and television largely make the role of the critic – as *literary* intermediary – redundant; and that anyway, modern art since abstraction is separated in some way from the literary.⁴²) The redundancy of art history as a source of authority for criticism is tied up with the particular form of art history as it was installed at the time; that of the iconological tradition of art history that had come to preside in the British context in the post-war period, and whose point of contact with modernist criticism was in its attention to the history of artistic form.

So an extreme strand of formalist criticism such as Greenberg's (and its mobilisation of a theory of history to substantiate critical judgements) can be seen as one strand of a wider thematic problem evident in the relationship between theoretical and institutional authority at the turn of the 1970s. This might be characterised as the prioritisation of objectivity over subjectivity in art critical discourse, and the role of art history as a source of objective authority regarding the nature of human experience and its relation to art. If one of the preoccupations of formalist criticism was to render developments in artistic form historically legible, this was also an underlying concern of the art-historical scholarship that enjoyed prominence in the British post-war context, in the influence of the iconological tradition promoted by the intellectual heirs of Aby Warburg. As Michael Schreyach observes, 'in an effort to recover and interpret the past, various methodologies have tried to come to terms with the materiality of art (permanence) from the point of view of history (contingency).'⁴³As Schreyach notes

⁴¹ Quentin Bell, *The Art Critic and the Art Historian* (Cambridge University Press, 1974). The goldfish in question refers to the controversy provoked by a work by American artist Newton Harrison at a Hayward Gallery exhibition of art from Los Angeles, in 1971, which involved catfish.

⁴² Bell.

⁴³ Michael Schreyach, 'The Recovery of Criticism', in *The State of Art Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 3–25 (p. 8).

of 'Vienna school formalism', that tradition of art historical studied prioritised a scientific objectivity over subjective investment. Discussing art historian Edgar Wind's misgivings about his own discipline, set out in his 1963 book *Art and Anarchy*:

Wind criticised Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl, along with later art critics Roger Fry and Clive bell, for losing contact with art's "imaginative forces" in their methodological attempts to detach their studies of artistic form (which holds aesthetic interest) from their own personal prejudices and passions (governed by practical interest or desire).

At stake in both formalist and iconographical approaches was the desire for an objectively retrievable understanding of subjectivity: either as an identifiable history of social meaning which might be reconstituted in order to make it available to the present (as in iconographic research); or else is in the verifiability of the historical logic and continuity of artistic form, which by implication allows subjective access to the past.

Artists as theorists and the turn to subjectivity

The question of the subjective dimension of experience is, I would contend, an important driver in the failing authority of a historicist art-critical paradigm. As I examine in Ch.1 with regard to the diversity of theoretical resources visible in the editorial space of *Studio International*, a central development of the mediation of art at the turn of the 1970s was the unravelling and fragmentation of the authority of previously dominant cohering critical discourses (primarily visible in the challenge to Greenbergian formalism) in favour of a multiplicity of competing theoretical perspectives, drawing on available intellectual currencies coming out of such broader debates as cybernetics, economics and media theory, and within a broader cultural preoccupation with technology, mass media and consumerism.

However, these areas of discussion often had only tentative points of contact with the orthodox sphere of visual art criticism, and required acts of mediation, usually made by artists, whose main consequence was the production of idiosyncratic forms of artistic production – for example in the assimilation of cybernetics by Roy Ascott, or the eclectic synthesis of philosophy and cosmology in the work of John Latham.

What distinguishes the avant-garde activity of the late 1960s from those of the early 1970s is the particular authorial modulation of the recourse to theoretical authorities. While earlier avant-garde artistic practices produced idiosyncratic formulations of theoretical work, later activities would make more overt claims to a general theoretical authority: in the case of Conceptualism, this would be through a use of the techniques of analytical philosophy to contest the self-evidence of art's definition according to 'morphological differentia', or the orthodox recognition of physical genres and material practices. But once the arbitrary nature of formal criteria had been established, and the authority of critical discourse based in historical continuity challenged, the question of the nature of subjective experience came to the fore, driving the attention of both radical artists and critics towards the search for a more coherent account of subjectivity. While driven in part by the existential crisis produced by the counterculture's rejection of social norms, the principle theoretical resources would be found in accounts of the unconscious inflected by post-structuralism, and the apparent authority that these could provide then becomes important.

Intellectual and national contexts

A key line of demarcation apparent in the art-critical conflicts of the 1970s, and visible through the publications examined in this thesis, is the shift from the failing hegemony of late Modernism and the emergent influence of new theoretical perspectives, in particular the assimilation of two key strands of 'continental' theory – structuralist semiotics and the revived, post-Freudian psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan. This theoretical shift in influence parallels the shift in influence of the Continent against that of America, or rather, of the dissolution of previously established institutional and intellectual relations between Britain and its neighbours. This is not to argue that the British context was merely a 'front line' between two 'spheres of influence', but rather to note that domestic context of intellectual activity around art in the period is marked by certain decisive shifts between competing discursive models, which have particular international biases and characteristics of origin.

The correspondence between intellectual tendencies and the economic and cultural relations between the United Kingdom and its Atlantic and European neighbours is not incidental. While artistic relations in the mid-twentieth century had, by dint of

proximity, war and emigration, formed strong ties to Europe and its avant-gardes, Britain's intellectual culture, governed by language, the insularism of Imperial power and the concentration of intellectual influence in its university culture, had stayed sheltered from European influences and was more oriented towards America. Pertinent to this study is the entrenchment of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, which as I note in Ch.1, had a particular influence on the early American and English 'analytical' or conceptual artists. This does not deny the intellectual migration from Europe that underpinned this culture, but puts it into distinct historical periods, conclusively demarcated by the events of 1968, and the turn of radical intellectuals aligned with the New Left to developments in Europe. As Perry Anderson perceptively argued in his 1968 essay 'Components of the National Culture', the roots of English contemporary philosophical quietism and pragmatism, and the pillars of its art-historical establishment, could be found in the 'white emigration' of intellectuals from Germany and Vienna in the 1920s and 30s, particularly following the rise to the power of the Nazis in Germany after 1933.⁴⁴ Anderson's account tracks the migration of European intellectual life to both Britain and America, noting among that migration the iconographic tradition of art history of those scholars associated with the Warburg Institute (principally Ernst Gombrich and Edgar Wind), in the linguistic philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the philosophy of science of Karl Popper.

The orientation to Atlantic relations is apparent elsewhere: the figure of Richard Wollheim – whose work on aesthetics drew on the criticism of the English art historian and critic Adrian Stokes (1902–72) and shared Stokes's interest in Kleinian psychoanalysis – is evident as an influential background figure, his 1968 *Art and its Objects* attaining a degree of popular success.⁴⁵ (Wollheim had strong teaching connections in the US, and was well connected in the London art world.⁴⁶) Wollheim's debt to Stokes points to another generational and national division, in this case inflecting the appropriation of psychoanalysis into art critical debate. Stokes's own psychoanalysis was with Melanie Klein, and the critic subsequently

⁴⁴ Perry Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *New Left Review*, I, 1968, 3–57.

⁴⁵ Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects. An Introduction to Aesthetics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

⁴⁶ It is interesting to find Wollheim as co-signatory to a letter of protest in support of the Hornsey College of Art occupation, alongside Garth Evans, David Annesley, Robyn Denny, Phillip King, John Latham, Paul Overy, Bernard Cohen, Barbara Latham, Roy Ascott, Norbert Lynton, Noel Forster, Christopher Cornford, David Hockney. See 'Action at Hornsey', *Times*, 12 July 1968, p. 11.

incorporated Klein's 'object relations' theory in his criticism.⁴⁷ Klein, settling in Britain in 1926, was a leading figure in British psychoanalytic circles. Stokes's use of Kleinian psychoanalytic theory in his discussion of artistic form – particularly sculpture and architecture – won him a readership among visual artists, particularly sculptors (as William Tucker's invocation of Stokes's criticism, noted in Ch. 4, suggests). But Klein's route from Freud's Europe (Klein had studied with Freud's pupil Karl Abraham in Berlin, before settling in England), and her subsequent influence on British art criticism, was again of an older period of intellectual migration. As I note in Ch.2, the older Freudian habits of thinkers such as Wollheim would come into conflict with a younger generation of feminists critics and activists drawing on a newer branch of Freudian theory, that of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.

A shared language and transatlantic allegiance facilitated institutional and critical contacts, again favouring the version of modernist criticism disseminated by Clement Greenberg and his followers. With Anthony Caro's success in the 1960s and the Anglophone base of his legitimation (through Greenberg and then Greenberg's disciple Michael Fried), and the subsequent success of the Caro-trained 'New Generation' sculptors who came out of the art school context of St Martins College, Greenberg's modernist critical project found its artistic reflection in the British context, though it quickly became a focus for growing critical antagonism, not least as contacts developed between American and British artists were facilitated in the art magazines by the internationalist ambitions of *Studio International* and the presence of émigré Americans, such as the collector and gallerist Jack Wendler and the young critic Barbara Reise. Reise's articles in *Studio International* in the Summer of 1968 would skewer Greenberg's 'increasingly defensive and academic stance against the subjective nature of aesthetic judgement',⁴⁸ while the tensions that would emerge around the influence of Greenberg's strand of formalist criticism could not be dissociated from a perceived American cultural imperialism, for example in the diatribes of the painter and critic Patrick Heron.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See for example, the Wollheim-prefaced Adrian Stokes, *The Invitation in Art* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1965).

⁴⁸ Barbara M. Reise, 'Greenberg and the Group: A Retrospective View: Part 2', *Studio International*, June 1968, 314–16 (p. 255).

⁴⁹ Heron, 'A Kind of Cultural Imperialism?'

But intellectual migration and generational transition also has a material effect on the constituency of the art world during the 70s. Starkly evident as an example is the abandonment of Britain by a number of figures associated with the older modernist milieu of the 1960s, a migration which turned primarily westwards. Bryan Robertson, instrumental at the Whitechapel Gallery in staging exhibitions of the 'New Generation' sculptors, had left for New York in 1968. Andrew Forge, painter, critic and head of painting at Goldsmiths College, and an important figure in the critical establishment in London of the 60s, emigrated to the US in 1972. The sculptor and critic William Tucker moved to New York in 1978. Other figures of the 1960s also moved west: after growing contacts with the US, Reyner Banham eventually moved to New York State in 1977. After leaving for Paris in 1973, David Hockney settled in Los Angeles in 1978. Some of this migration can be attributed to the increasingly difficult circumstances the commercial market for contemporary art found itself in by the mid-70s. An important correlative to consider here is that as the commercial market for a primarily contemporary formalism and Pop art atrophied, the contemporary art practices of the first half of the 1970s became increasingly dependent on state subsidy, while the economic crisis in the US opened a space for the increasing influence of Europe as a sphere of professional contacts and commerce. Here the opening of the British art world to European channels becomes evident; from Harald Szeeman's deployment in London of his seminal group exhibition 'When Attitudes Become Form' at the ICA in 1969, the somewhat subterranean influence of Sigi Krauss's Gallery House through 1971 to 1972 (supported, if not well-tolerated, by the German Cultural Institute in London), Richard Demarco's championing of European avant-gardism through his activities in Edinburgh and London, and particularly the rising profile of Joseph Beuys, especially through the ICA show 'Art into Society, Society in Art' in late 1974. And Britain's accession to the European Economic Community on 1 January 1973 further cemented the prospects of British art in relation to Europe, symbolised by the *Europalia 73 Great Britain* programme of cultural events staged in Brussels in September 1973, visual art figuring in the exhibition 'Henry Moore to Gilbert & George', and including representatives of British conceptualism and post-formalist sculpture.⁵⁰ The politics and economics of Britain's relative status to the US and

⁵⁰ See *Henry Moore to Gilbert & George: Modern British Art from the Tate Gallery: Palais Des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 28 September-17 November 1973* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1973). Drawing predominantly on artists from the 50s and 60s, the show included a 'New Developments' section which included work by Gilbert and George, Hamish Fulton, Richard

Europe is therefore also an important determining context for both the production of art and the viability of commercial or independent platforms for art criticism.

Crisis in Britain; the political and economic turn to Europe

The publications reviewed in this thesis should also be understood in the context of the turmoil of both domestic and international politics and economics, and a brief account of the economic background of the period is useful here. With the end of the 1960s, the era in which Western governments managed fixed exchange rates came to a dramatic end. The turn of 1968 was marked by the devaluation of sterling against the dollar, in which Sterling dropped in value by 14%. Devaluation and inflation would have an effect on both the British art market, and the art press. In a perceptive comment in *Studio International* on the auction market, long-time salesroom reporter George Savage could ask:

How will the situation affect the art-market? One effect is certain – prices will continue to rise. Nor can we expect any easing of prices abroad. The most noticeable feature of the immediate post-devaluation period was the rush for gold, which was the measure of the international distrust of paper money generally...⁵¹

Savage reports that ‘the immediate rise in price-levels was extremely noticeable, and one sale brought prices 30 per cent above those estimated when the £ was standing at \$2.80,’ concluding that ‘the rush to buy was part of the same movement as the demand for gold.’⁵²

Two consequences might be drawn from this. First, that the ‘international distrust of paper money’ would precipitate the slow-down of the market for the work of British artists, since the flight into art buying for investment security (artworks that ‘retain their value’) meant, in effect, a turn away from the speculation and risk involved in buying new art. This would affect those artists who had benefitted from the contemporary art market boom of the 1960s. (As an example noted in Ch.4, Alistair McAlpine, a prominent collector of ‘New Generation’ sculpture, donated a large number of those works to the Tate in 1972, adding to the public impression

Long, Barry Flanagan, Victor Burgin, John Hilliard, Michael Craig-Martin, Stephen Buckley, Keith Milow and John Davis.

⁵¹ George Savage, ‘Art Prices Current’, *Studio International*, May 1968, 284.

⁵² Savage.

that such work had become outmoded.) Secondly, that devaluation also served to internationalise artistic activity, since the fall of the pound made the work of British artists cheaper to international collectors, while making the markets of Europe and America more attractive to British artists, if they were able to access them.⁵³ Such economic conditions are an important background aspect to how British art practices and critical discourses firstly attempted to come to terms with the recent developments of American Minimalism, before turning increasingly to activity in Europe.

The question of the shift in orientation from the US to Europe is significant, since devaluation represented, at a political level, the broader decline of Britain's international position and the realisation that its future was increasingly dependent on the Continent. As Alan Sked and Chris Cook point out, while prime minister Harold Wilson sought to blame the 1969 devaluation on the instability of the Arab-Israeli 'Six Day War', in fact 'the Government's announcement of their intention to enter the EEC was much more a factor – since it was no secret in government and financial circles that the existing sterling parity and Common Market entry were incompatible.'⁵⁴ The issue of Britain's entry to the common market, then, hangs over the end of the 1960s through to its joining in 1973, and its repercussions would leave its traces in developments in art during that period. Having vetoed Britain's membership of the EEC in 1967, the political crisis precipitated in France by the 'événements' of May 1968 would lead to de Gaulle's resignation in April 1969, reopening Britain's way to membership, which was taken up by Edward Heath's conservatives after their election win in June 1970.

Shadowing these case studies are the political instability and the economic shocks of the decade. In the field of visual art, the period is witness to an exceptional period of critical conflict: between different 'factions' of artistic practice; between artists and critics; and between the institutions of art, government and the mainstream media, particularly the national press. It becomes apparent that the national context is important, inasmuch as the theoretical and critical conflicts that are played out reflect the economic difficulties of a stagnating commercial culture

⁵³ The fortunes of conceptualism, as a form of art that could access a commercial market, is closely bound up with the support of non-domestic, primarily European collector markets. For an authoritative account see Sophie Richard, *Unconcealed, the International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967-77: Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collections*, ed. by Lynda Morris (London: Ridinghouse, 2009).

⁵⁴ Alan Sked, *Post-War Britain: A Political History*, 3rd ed.. (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 224.

and the relative rise in importance of public patronage, as much as the shifting centre of gravity of intellectual and cultural influence, towards the developments taking place in France at the time.

The mediation of international influences apparent in this study also suggests that the conclusive breakdown of economic insularism precipitated a parallel decline in cultural and artistic insularism. In his study of visual art culture in Britain since the 1970s, Neil Mulholland asks:

What is 'Britain'? How can we produce narratives of 'British art' if these very terms are constantly under dispute? British sovereignty largely ended in the mid-1970s as its economic self-determinism was taken away by international economic forces beyond its control... A reaction against Modernist Internationalism in art and criticism from this period onwards is largely symbolic, signifying the cultural last gasp of a dying national imaginary in the face of totalizing globalisation.⁵⁵

Mulholland's approach in *The Cultural Devolution*, especially in his account of the British art world of the late 1970s, emphasises the detail of the controversies as they operated within the scope of a 'national debate' and a national artistic 'scene'. In terms of historical periodization, it is also clear that 1976 – year of Britain's bailout by the International Monetary Fund, and the moment at which a new neoliberal conservatism, championed by Margaret Thatcher, begins its ascendancy – becomes a turning point for art publications, in which the economic crisis is an influencing factor: *Studio International* under Richard Cork declines to a bi-monthly publication in 1975 while its cover price more than doubles between 1971 and 1977; *Art & Artists* and *Arts Review* see their advertising shrink back from 1974 onwards; meanwhile, 1976 sees the launch of the cheap-to-produce *Artscribe* and *Art Monthly*, the former soon to be backed by art dealer Leslie Waddington, the latter supported by wealthy American collector and gallerist Jack Wendler.

Mulholland is right to emphasise the contradiction between the turn towards a national context as a largely symbolic gesture, just at the moment at which the British nation state becomes conclusively diminished. Yet this also misses some of the sense in which a new public for art was in the process of forming, in which economic context and intellectual culture were in the process of disengaging from

⁵⁵ Neil Mulholland, 'Introduction', in *The Cultural Devolution: Art in Britain in the Late Twentieth Century* (Aldershot; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 1–4 (p. 3).

each other. The emphasis on the national scene is of course evident: the first issue of Wendler's *Art Monthly*, edited by Peter Townsend after his departure from *Sudio International*, and launched in October 1976, asserts that:

There is at present no visual arts magazine which emphasises contemporary art and its 'national context'. That is the gap this magazine will try to fill, hopefully keeping the price low enough to reach a wide audience, including students, and running its printing schedules tightly enough to allow current news material to be included.⁵⁶

Art Monthly's particular insistence on the national context and a 'wide audience' is in a sense pragmatic, since the evident failure of a more internationalist editorial model for art magazines based on high production values and heavy gallery advertising revenue was not easy to sustain. But *Art Monthly's* appeal to a national context was pragmatic in another sense, seeking to establish a critical platform for debate which drew off the controversy increasingly attending contemporary art's in national debate, while appealing to a readership which now existed beyond the narrower remit of the commercial art world.

Mulholland's account of the period after 1976, particularly with regards to the activity of the 'crisis critics', situates individuals such as Richard Cork and Peter Fuller in relation to the dissolution of a recognisably British 'national culture'.⁵⁷ In the first half of the 1970s, however, the figure of the art critic addressing a national public was still a viable possibility, though coming under increasing pressure as political conflict increased. As I discuss in Ch.3, individuals including Cork, Fuller and Caroline Tisdall would take up the position of 'art critic' on significant public platforms. In the case of Cork and Fuller, and to a lesser extent Tisdall, these critics would attempt to negotiate their support of contemporary artistic developments in relation to the prevailing political and cultural climate. While Cork persisted in advocating for contemporary art to a national public, as part of his commitment to a democratic and inclusive national culture, Fuller found himself in increasing disagreement with the 'theoretical left' of what he saw as an increasingly co-opted and institutionalised art world, while struggling to navigate the collapsing

⁵⁶ 'Editorial Note', *Art Monthly*, October 1976, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Neil Mulholland, 'The Fall and Rise of Crisis Criticism', *Visual Culture in Britain (U.K.)*, 1.2 (2000), 57-77.

prospects of the radical press of the New Left and the counterculture that had developed in the wake of May 1968.

By 1976, the prospects of the left politics and the counterculture which had underwritten these critics' defence of new artistic currents had evaporated. After the defeat of Edward Heath's government by the miners in 1974, the radical left had to deal with the political realities of Labour administrations acting to contain the demands of militant labour, while capitulating to the institutions of global capital in the form of the IMF. So, by the late 70s, confronted with the reality of the retrenchment of the left to which they had in various ways aligned themselves, these national critics retreated or recanted their earlier positions. Fuller, protégé of John Berger and the most intensely committed to the left, became increasingly dismayed at the rise of post-structuralist theoretical fashions among radical art that, as he saw it, did away with the active, experiencing subject. By contrast, Cork, having had privileged access to the media and art establishment through his position as critic for the *Evening Standard* throughout the decade, made a belated attempt to reconfigure his earlier support of avant-garde art into a support for an art of social purpose, between his curatorial input into the exhibition of British art in Italy 'Arte Inglese Oggi' (1976) and 'Art for Whom?' at the Serpentine Gallery in 1978.⁵⁸ Tisdall, meanwhile, drifted away from her initial involvement as critic of the *Guardian*, writing less and less on art and increasingly on social affairs and international political issues by the end of the 1970s.

That their political and critical commitments could shift radically in that time needs to be seen not merely as an indication of political opportunism or naivety, but rather as the effect of the failure of their claim to effective intervention in the public sphere. To attend to the critical and political accommodations and recantations of critics such as Cork and Fuller requires a concept of the status of the 'public intellectual', of 'the public' and 'the public sphere' and their concomitant dissolution as fundamental to the attenuation of the 'critic' subsequently. For some, such concepts and cultural values were anyway clearly outmoded and politically bankrupt. In his concluding arguments in *The End of Art Theory*, Burgin demonstrated his grasp of the prevailing critical currents:

⁵⁸ Cork's political vacillations drew hostile criticism from other critics on the left; see John Tagg and Peter Fuller, 'Richard Cork and the "New Road to Wigan Pier"', *Art Monthly*, October 1979.

[Foucault] argued (following Gramsci) that, for some time now, intellectuals have in fact tended to play another role – no longer purveyors of the general, the ‘good for all time’, they now engage the particular conditions of their everyday professional and social lives. No longer ‘universal’ intellectuals, they have become ‘specific’ intellectuals.⁵⁹

The aspirations and failures of the critic as public intellectual, rather than being examined in terms of the cultural politics of the period, and the failures of the left and of radical intellectuals’ address to a broader public, was here theorised into irrelevance. Modesty, not ambition, characterised the downgrading of the intellectual’s capacity for public intervention:

This, today, is the modest condition of the intellectual in the art institution – whether they be styled ‘artist’, ‘critic’, ‘theoretician’, ‘historian’, ‘curator’, or whatever. To accept this condition is to work not for ‘posterity’, ‘the people’, ‘truth’, not even for that hardy perennial chimera ‘the general public’; it is to work, rather, on those particular projects which seem *critical* at a particular historical juncture...⁶⁰

Writing retrospectively in the mid-1980s, Burgin’s apologia for the decline of the public intellectual was, in effect, a justification for the withdrawal of the public intellectual to the more secure confines of those institutions that maintained some degree of insulation from the harsher environment of the public sphere. Burgin’s rationale in many respects reflects and justifies the tendency towards the breakup of a singular, if contested ‘public’, in both the fragmentation of the public into what would emerge as the ‘identity politics’ that defined the 1980s, as well as the installation of these minority interests in academia. The problematic nature of the institutionalisation of radical theory was not lost on others during the 1970s, however. While Art & Language began publication of the journal *Art-Language* in 1969, in order to ‘explore the ideological foundation of art using the British tradition of Analytical linguistic philosophy’,⁶¹ by 1976, the group’s attention had turned to an attack on the growing influence of radical theory, but linking it to a critique of institutionalisation. The ‘importation’ of radical theory was not lost on

⁵⁹ Burgin, ‘The End of Art Theory’, p. 201.

⁶⁰ Burgin, ‘The End of Art Theory’, p. 201.

⁶¹ Stuart Sillars, “‘Is It Possible for Me to Do Nothing as My Contribution?’ : Visual Art in the 1970s’, ed. by B. J. Moore-Gilbert and B. J. Moore-Gilbert, *The Arts in the 1970s : Cultural Closure?* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 277.

the journal, which mockingly characterised the enthusiasm among art world radicals for continental theory as ‘The French Disease’:

Watching the rise of sociology amongst the academic and lumpen intelligentsia is too, too sick-making. The experts (sic) and middle-persons (sic) of the art-bureaucracy, artists with radical careers, etc., are all arming themselves and their ‘disciplines’ – this time with a ‘science’.⁶²

‘The French Disease’ attacked the adoption of continental theory among American and British ‘radical’ artists and intellectuals, venting particular spleen on the then-recently launched *October* – ‘the journal of managerial idiocy’. Bad-tempered, playful and offensive, the article nevertheless identified the bureaucratising tendency at stake in the convergence between radical theory and institutionalised intellectual practice:

[*October*] comes from the University and has its commitments to the University. Gratuitous intervention in various forms of actual historical practice is a norm of University ‘humanities’ life. To turn these practices into items of consumption, courses of study, is intellectual vampirism.⁶³

Yet the ‘French Disease’ had, after all, been generated within the intense, but wholly institutionalised context of French academic culture of the 1960s. As Paul de Man had already noted back in 1967 on the upheavals then taking place in French literary criticism:

Well-established rules and conventions that governed the discipline of criticism and made it a cornerstone of the French intellectual establishment have been so badly tampered with that the entire edifice threatens to collapse... One is tempted to speak of recent developments in Continental criticism in terms of crisis.⁶⁴

De Man’s essay deals principally with the overthrow of earlier tendencies in French literary criticism by new critical approaches whose significant difference was their turn towards other disciplinary fields of investigation. De Man reports ironically on the quick succession of influences, from sociology to anthropology to linguistics to

⁶² Art-Language, ‘The French Disease’, *Art-Language*, 3.4 (1976), 23–36 (p. 23).

⁶³ Art-Language, p. 32.

⁶⁴ Paul de Man, ‘The Crisis of Contemporary Criticism’, *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 6.1 (1967), 38–57 (p. 38).

psychoanalysis, and of the 'sudden expansion of literary studies outside their own province and into the realm of the social sciences'.⁶⁵

As I have outlined, the turn to theoretical sources outside of the dominant British context had much to do with the problem of how to theorise the nature of subjectivity and the political identity of subjective experience, and art's relationship to these. The identity of the 'public' for art, its capacity and availability for critical reflection, and therefore the position of the critic as mediator, is dependent, in part, on the theorisation of the subject's capacities or incapacities. And a hallmark of the post-structuralist influences that appeared in the art discourse of the 1970s was precisely the ambiguity over the constitution of the subject's agency. The analysis of the subject as *incapable* of self-determination is, I would argue, one of the (perhaps unlooked for) consequences of the theorisation of the subject as both split between unconscious and conscious existence, and its constitution *by* discourse. The paradox of this for intellectual work is that the theorist must necessarily exclude themselves from that condition of incapacity, at the practical cost of a loss of communication with that part of the public that is deemed to be subject, in Michel Foucault's terms, of the processes of 'subjectification'.

This is not to argue that the theorisation of subjectivity does not allow for a practice of 'consciousness raising', as is evident, for example, in the women's movement's articulation of feminist theory in the magazine *Spare Rib*, examined in Ch.2. But the tendency to pit radical theorisations of subjectivity against a dominant 'normative' subject carries with it the risk of institutionalising divisions between subjects within a public or a social body. The tension that appears in the contrast between Newman's attempt to reconsider the relationship of criticism to theory and Burgin's liquidation of the judging, critical subject, for example, is the product, I would argue, of an irreconcilable divergence of attitudes towards how subjects negotiate their relationship to their individual experience and to their experience as part of a community. From this perspective, the critic's identity only makes sense as the symbolic representative of the public's reflection on its own active attempt to reflect on the meaning of its own experience. In this, the theorisation of experience is always active, but constantly tested in practice, and, crucially, must be open to revision. That this activity is not innocent of the process

⁶⁵ de Man, p. 40.

of institutionalisation that installs both theory and criticism, in practice, in particular professional formations, means that at given points the institutional forms of both theory and criticism become dogmatic, provoking the establishment of both new public venues and new critical perspectives.

This dynamic – between the formation of alternative public venues and alternative critical perspectives – is a guiding theme in the study of the publications explored in this thesis. In Ch.1 I explore the debates that occurred in the pages of *Studio International* in last years of the 1960s, examining the magazine's representation of new developments in art, and the response of critics to artistic practices which increasingly defined the critical terms on which they were based, noting the increasing difficulty found by critics when attempting to bring their own critical conventions to practices based on very different intellectual resources. The chapter surveys the critical themes that preoccupied both critics and artists, describing the cultural context of anxiety over the development of science, technology and consumer culture. I note that the turn to new methodological and technical approaches provided a context for the challenge to modernist criticism, represented by the magazine's staging of critical debates that had developed in the United States (particularly around Minimalism) and its increasingly critical attention to the critical reputation of Clement Greenberg. While the chapter describes the magazine's growing presentation of unmediated material in the form of the artist's statement, it also detects the common ground between formalism and 'post-object' art on the question of objectivity. As the conventionality of art based merely on formal aspects becomes apparent, the idea of art as something nominated by the artist, presents the possibility of art that requires no mediation. However, the arbitrary nature of this, and the necessity of its sanction by the institution rather than the discourse of art, appears as a retreat from the question of subjective experience and critical reflection. Examining contributions by British and American conceptualists (Victor Burgin and Joseph Kosuth), I discuss the way in which the issue of subjective experience is marginalised by recourse to theoretical disciplines – in linguistic philosophy and psychology – which tend to objectify it. In parallel to the extreme nominative practices of these early conceptualists, I note how even artists most closely associated with the object – sculptors associated with St Martins College – become self-critical of their reliance on the language of the criticism they themselves employ, opting again for a withdrawal from the mediation of language to a position where the 'self-evidence'

and autonomy of objects is privileged over subjective reflection and artistic intervention.

While Ch.1 looks at the critical and artistic conflicts of interest that occur with a prestigious and institutionally well connected specialist art magazine, Ch.2 follows the more precarious activity of art criticism across three titles of the underground and radical press in London between 1971 and 1973; specifically the short lived counterculture weekly *INK* and the New Left weekly *7 Days*, along with the more enduring women's movement magazine *Spare Rib*. In each case I survey how these titles cover visual art, and the relative presence or lack of critical debate, and discuss the relationship between each title's editorial culture and its relative privileging of visual art. An important theme here is the cultural tension that develops between the counterculture's embattled defence of subjective liberation and the women's movement's growing criticism of the sexual politics of both counterculture and mainstream culture. Between these is situated *7 Days*, a publication which attempted to continue the left-wing politics of the New Left newspapers established out of the student activism of May 1968, *Black Dwarf* and *Red Mole*. While based on very different cultural and political perspectives, what links these publications is their common coverage of the arts and popular culture, in which visual art is given varying degrees of priority. While marginal to the culture of specialist art magazines, these publications present early attempts at articulating new theoretical approaches to visual art and visual culture: *7 Days* publishes art and film criticism by Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey, in which the background influence of *Screen* in its turn to French structuralism is apparent, while psychoanalysis became a key reference point for the early feminist art criticism to appear in *Spare Rib*, which includes Mulvey's psychoanalytically driven art criticism. Throughout these publications I attempt to identify the points of contact between the critics' broader theoretical agendas and particular works, to observe how artworks are incorporated or else remain resistant to the critic's use of theory as an interpretative or explanatory tool. Each publication offers a different configuration of that encounter, in which the editorial scope of the publication determines the extent to which close criticism of artworks is balanced against more systematic theoretical claims.

Ch.2 discusses visual art criticism as it appears in publications that shared a similarly marginal position to the established institutional economy of visual art, relating their political and cultural agendas to their particular formulation of visual

art criticism. Ch.3 shifts the focus to the writing of a single critic, Peter Fuller, whose prolific output in both specialist and generalist publications during the first half of the 1970s makes him a significant example of a new generation of art critics which appeared at the turn of the 1970s. Placing him in the context of his peers, among them the newspaper critics Richard Cork and Caroline Tisdall, the chapter examines the personal investments which underlie the development of Fuller's early period of writing until 1976, after which he substantially altered his position and publicly recanted his early writing. Those other critics, who largely supported the radical and innovative practices of the art of the early 70s, found themselves having to articulate publicly their unambiguous advocacy of that art to their readers, to the point of having to conceive of the possibility of the redundancy of their role as critics. Fuller, by contrast, retained a more ambiguous attitude to the work of contemporary artists, while his criticism makes evident a level of subjective investment in which attachments to political radicalism appear meshed with more psychological and emotional intensities. Fuller's unstable emotional history has some part to play in the energy that he brings to his criticism. As the chapter goes on to argue, his early support of more experimental tendencies is bound up with his formative experiences in the milieu of the radical left, traceable back to his experience of the anti-Vietnam War protests culminating in the Grosvenor Square riot in March 1968. In Fuller's own art magazine, the short-lived *Synthesis* of 1969, the critic's often overwrought and ambiguous attitude to the body and sexuality are present, a facet of Fuller's attention which continues, in the early 70s, in his writing for the established art press, in parallel to more sober and dispassionate commentaries for the centre-left magazine *New Society*. While some accounts of Fuller's later career frame his shift in position as a 'turn to the right', I suggest that Fuller's 'conservative' return to an older tradition of aesthetics might be explained as the critic's attempt to retrieve and retain the subjective intensity of the experience of the artwork, against both the theoretical demotion of subjectivity of the theoretical left, and the fading sense of political and cultural liberation which characterised the beginning of the 1970s.

While the discussion of Fuller's trajectory through the early 70s describes the unstable relationship between critical priorities, political commitments and personal investments as rendered in criticism and modulated by the writer's access to multiple publications, Ch.4 makes an account of the fortunes of formalist art in the face of the institutionalisation of radical artistic practice, and the decline of the

public reputation and commercial market for non-figurative art. The chapter takes as its starting point the history of the arch-formalist magazine *ONE*, running from 1973 to 1975, and edited by the sculptor Barry Martin. In an echo of Fuller's association with the influential left-wing critic John Berger, Martin's *ONE* was the result of Martin's connections within the mostly formalist milieu of artists in London, particularly his collaboration with the prominent sculptor and critic William Tucker. As I recount, *ONE*'s establishment was a direct reaction to the criticism of formalist and non-figurative art that had developed in the previously supportive *Studio International*, as well as the rapid rise in official recognition of conceptualist and experimental practices. As a magazine, *ONE* is partly interesting for the means of its support – financed by the industrialist and collector Alistair McAlpine. Unconstrained by the commercial pressures that beset much of the art press, *ONE* attempted to provide a platform for the critical positions gradually excluded by the shift in attention to alternative artistic practices. Mired in its attention to territorial disputes with the official art world, the magazine struggled to establish more than a hesitant and defensive position, rehearsing entrenched habits of formalist criticism while unable to penetrate the problem of the codification of attention to formal qualities that excluded the possibility of a more subjective evaluation of formal experience. However, *ONE*'s main practical value was to serve as a bridge between the older generation of modernist artists of the late 60s and a younger group of painters and sculptors, who had found themselves, late to the game, with few institutional supports for their work. As the chapter later sets out, *ONE*'s survival into 1975 provided a meeting point for the future editors of *Artscribe*. Those artists, by contrast, were able to establish a more polemical response to what appeared as the official or semi-official imposition of 'alternative developments' in conceptual and performance art. *Artscribe*, however, was less dogmatic in its support of the earlier, more rationalistic currents of British modernism, intuiting that discussions of formal concerns without some element of subjective investment, of 'feeling', had become empty verbal rituals. As the chapter concludes, *Artscribe*'s co-editor James Faure Walker would make a claim for a practice of criticism as a form of *resistance* to theory, driven not by generalisation and abstraction administered to art, but emerging from the 'chaotic' process of articulating the encounter between the particularities of artworks and individual sense experience.

Faure Walker's position, as it turns out, made the link between an open and provisional criticism and the politics of institutional power, by associating the form of peer criticism originating in the studio with an individualist, anti-institutional politics opposed to the managerial and bureaucratic dynamic of institutionalised discourse, whatever its form, or theoretical position. That problem, of the monopolisation of discourse by institutional power, and the struggle to form a 'community of judgement' as the correlate of a free and self-determining public, would characterise the next quarter-century of the 'crisis of criticism', and is yet to be resolved.

Chapter 1

Towards the New Art: *Studio International*, 1968–1970

*Clearly it is no longer an artist talking but a theoretician. Theory and Art are incompatible.*⁶⁶

*If I now go back to that moment – the brief moment of Conceptual Art as I envisage it, lasting a mere five years or so between 1967 and 1972 – then it seems that so far as the possibility of criticism was concerned, the really productive effect of art as writing and of writing as art was that it made holes in the barriers that had come to separate the self-criticism of practice from the practice of criticism.*⁶⁷

By the close of the 1960s, the identity of art, the criteria that defined it, as well as its ethical and social role, began to come under increasing scrutiny by artists, critics and others. In the last years of the decade the relationship between critical ideas and artworks, and between artists and the institutional mediators of art, became the subject of on-going public debate. Venues of art criticism were not isolated from this scrutiny, and in the case of the British monthly magazine *Studio International*, such scrutiny became a key aspect of its editorial project. From 1966, under its new editor Peter Townsend, *Studio* became a significant forum and platform for the deliberation of new developments in the art of the period. But perhaps more crucially, the magazine attempted to negotiate, and in some ways served to further exacerbate, the increasing tension developing between new developments in art led by a younger generation of artists, and the exercise of critical authority, as represented by the figure of the critic and the practice of art criticism.

This chapter examines the changing relationship of art to criticism in *Studio*, paying particular attention to the period 1968 to 1970. While Townsend's editorship ran from January 1966 to the middle of 1975, the last years of the 1960s span a number

⁶⁶ Michel Claura, 'Paris Commentary', *Studio International*, January 1969, 47–49.

⁶⁷ Charles Harrison, 'Feeling the Earth Move', in *Since 1950: Art and Its Criticism*, by Charles Harrison (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 127–46 (p. 146).

of important shifts in British cultural and political history, and it is during this period that Townsend's *Studio* was most implicated in the staging, representation and support of radical artistic developments, particularly around the emergence of conceptual art. The economic and political instabilities of 1968 – among these the effects of the devaluation of Sterling at the end of the 1967, the protests against the Vietnam War and the art college rebellions of May 1968 – offer a backdrop for the increasingly volatile discussions taking place among and between artists and critics, in which the critical terminology and theoretical foundations of art's aesthetic value and social function came to the fore. Through *Studio's* growing editorial support for artists' opinions and critical commentary, the magazine gave public legitimacy to a wider spectrum of theoretical speculations about art that contributed to undermining the already weakening authority of formalist strand of Modernist criticism embodied in the figure of the American critic Clement Greenberg.

The complicated relationship of artistic practice to the role of theory is a central aspect of the editorial trajectory of *Studio* in this period. While the authority of Modernist criticism was in the process of being undermined – not least through *Studio's* publishing of explicit criticism both of Greenberg himself and of the dominance of American art – the possibility or even necessity of any kind of general 'theory' that might occupy the space vacated by formalism remained uncertain. If a 'theory' is to be understood as a proposal of a general epistemological framework by which a form of activity can be recognised and understood, then the last years of the 1960s in *Studio* presents the reader with a burgeoning of theorising by artists. Crucially however, such 'theorising' was informal, closely tied to individual artistic practices, while referring to a scattered landscape of intellectual and cultural discourses that did not directly apply to art, and which depended on the mediating advocacy of the artist. As we shall see, it was not until the appearance of the strand of 'analytical' Conceptual art – primarily through the publication of texts by Art & Language and Joseph Kosuth in 1969 – that the possibility of theorising about art on general epistemological grounds emerged. The apparently paradigmatic claims of those texts put into stark contrast the relationship of artistic practice to theoretical practice, by explicitly combining both – artists had previously referred to theories, here theory was incorporated (principally as text) into the artwork itself.

The position of *Studio* as both British and international in perspective, and its intermediary position between the US and Europe, is reflected in its attention to both activities east and west of the Atlantic. The volatile economic climate of 1969-73 had a significant effect on the fortunes of the commercial art world, bringing into stark relief the fact that the UK's older cultural and political ties to America were beginning to unravel, while the issue of Britain's relationship to Europe rose in importance. American economic difficulties were highlighted by the breakdown of the Bretton Woods agreement (the system of dollar-backed fixed exchange rates over which the US had presided since 1949),⁶⁸ while Britain's economic relationship with the US and Europe was changing quickly: by 1973, Britain had become a member of the European Economic Community, and had, with other European economies abandoned the 'gold standard' of the Bretton Woods system.

Britain's entry to the EEC marks the conclusion of this shift away from America as an economic and cultural reference point. Art and art criticism were not separable from such influences and an important aspect of *Studio's* editorial activity lay in its negotiation of tendencies that lay across geographical and generation divisions. The magazine offered significant support for American post-formalist developments, initially in its coverage of minimalist art, but more critically, in its profiling of the emerging developments in post-formalist art, as they appeared in America, Britain and Europe. At the same time, *Studio* sought to represent the activities of a national artistic scene, continuing to support the older generation of artists established in the 1960s, while paying closer attention to alternative artistic activities at home. But the more unstable economic situation could not help but impact on how a international magazine might function commercially. By 1972, *Studio* had turned increasingly towards coverage of national activity, and while 'conceptual art' had been officially recognised as 'The New Art', in the Arts Council's Hayward Gallery show in August, this took shape in an exclusively British line-up of artists.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The US devalued the dollar in 1971. A second sterling crisis in June 1972 would further devalue the pound, which became a floating currency.

⁶⁹ The New Art presented the work of Keith Arnatt, Art & Language, Victor Burgin, Michael Craig-Martin, David Dye, Barry Flanagan, Hamish Fulton, Gilbert and George, Richard Long, Keith Milow, Gerald Newman, John Stezaker and David Tremlett. See *The New Art: [catalogue of an Exhibition Held at The] Hayward Gallery, August 17-September 24, 1972* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972).

If *Studio* has a particular position in the context of art criticism in Britain at the end of the 1960s and the turn of the 70s, its status as a specialist contemporary art magazine with an international readership was by no means unique. As Jasia Reichardt could remark in the magazine in 1966, in a commentary on the state of art criticism, 'The merits of criticism would not be the subject of such frequent discussion if it were not for the fact that at no other time has contemporary art been documented and written about with such eagerness as it is today.'⁷⁰ As evidence Reichardt gives a list of over twenty art magazines available internationally.⁷¹ But other than the newly-launched *Art & Artists* (first published in April 1966) *Studio* stood as the only substantial British mainstream art magazine on contemporary art at the time.⁷²

Founded as *The Studio* in 1893 and bought in 1964 by William Hearst's National Magazine Company (which renamed it *Studio International*), the magazine was by then rehearsing a recognisable mix of monographic features, surveys pieces and gallery review commentaries, largely of modernist painting and sculpture, with little attention to new developments outside of these practices. As part of the NMC stable of magazines, *Studio* had become one of number of high-end lifestyle-oriented magazines, as the frequent subscription offers to other NMC titles such as *The Connoisseur* and *Harper's Bazaar* run in the pages of *Studio* suggests.

But as Townsend later recounted, by 1965 the National Magazine Company had 'tired of [*Studio*], offered it around, found no takers, and prepared to run it into the ground'.⁷³ In the autumn of 1965, the magazine was bought as a result of the merger of publishers Cory Adams with MacKay's, a firm of book printers based in Kent,⁷⁴ who appointed Townsend and gave him free rein. Townsend, the public school-educated son of a Quaker and socialist, who had spent the 1940s working in China as a reporter, and then as a representative of the Chinese workers' industrial cooperatives, had returned to London in 1949, in advance of the Cultural Revolution and was then working on the English-language Chinese magazine *China*

⁷⁰ Jasia Reichardt, 'Potted Art', *Studio International*, June 1966, 226–27.

⁷¹ These include the American titles *Art News*, *Art in America* and a then-recently established *Artforum*, to the French *l'Oeil* and *Cimaise*, the Belgian *Quadrum* and the Swiss-based *Art International*, among others.

⁷² Townsend suggests that the launch of *Art & Artists* was 'spurred on in part by the expected demise of *Studio*'. Peter Townsend, 'Ave Atque...or, a Pot-Pourri of Random Reflections', *Studio International*, June 1975, 168–71 (p. 169).

⁷³ Townsend, p. 169.

⁷⁴ Melvin, p. 183.

Monthly. His brother, William Townsend, was a tutor at the Slade School of Fine art. (In 1968 William Townsend was appointed professor, tasked with implementing a postgraduate Fine Art course.) So Townsend was politically on the left, connected as an insider to the London art scene though without previous direct involvement, and a journalist and editor by training.

Townsend's mission for *Studio* was to make the editorial project of the magazine explicit, both by highlighting its position as a nationally based publication with a view on international activities, and in emphasising a reflexive approach to the practice and economy of criticism. This was to be done by reflecting on the nature of criticism as a discipline, and by highlighting the distinction between artists and critics writing about art. In his inaugural 'editorial statement' of January 1966,⁷⁵ Townsend proposed to make the magazine 'an authoritative reflection of the current situation here in Britain,' continuing that:

The time seems right for such an emphasis. The position of the arts is here more fluid, the activity greater, than in most other Western countries. This has little to do with nationalism; it has more to do with the fact that Britain, poised between the United States and Europe, is susceptible to the influences of both and wholly committed to neither. But the resultant activity is positive and creative, and it is important that it be reported and commented upon not only by the critics but by the artists themselves and by other people deeply concerned with the arts.⁷⁶

To bring *Studio* closer to the creative activity of the British art scene, Townsend engaged the prolific *Times* art critic Edward Lucie-Smith to write a monthly London commentary, held on to the services of the established New York critic Dore Ashton, and brought on the assistant director of the ICA, Jasia Reichardt, to contribute articles covering London exhibitions and events that fell beyond Lucie-Smith's more traditional gallery round-ups. Of equal importance, Townsend put together an editorial advisory committee, consisting of the painter and critic Andrew Forge, who was then head of painting at Goldsmiths College, the émigré Czechoslovak art historian and critic J.P. Hodin, who brought his strong connections to Europe (and who until 1966 edited the Belgian modernist art

⁷⁵ Unlike his predecessor, Townsend did not contribute a regular editorial letter for the magazine: 'In the Case of *Studio International*... from that point onwards the editor's 'I' was dimmed by the editorial 'We'.' Townsend, p. 169.

⁷⁶ 'Editorial Statement', *Studio International*, January 1966, 1.

magazine *Quadrum*), the critic David Thompson, and Alan Bowness, lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art and who was then instrumental in expanding the Courtauld's study of modernist art. (It was from the Courtauld that Townsend would recruit as assistant editor Bowness's student Charles Harrison, and later Tim Hilton.)

Furthermore, the 'statement' continued, the magazine should 'provide an outlet for considered opinion on the purpose and place of criticism', while presenting a 'balanced critical perspective that does not ignore the way in which the art of the past is constantly being re-interpreted in terms of today'.⁷⁷

These two editorial approaches – taking a national perspective on international activity, and an openness to a plurality of critical reflection – would become closely intertwined and often find themselves in conflict, since questions of critical authority were both a professional question – whether the artist or the critic took precedence – and a geo-cultural one, as the issue of the value of artistic innovation and its critical terms came to be played out across international lines.

In this respect, Townsend's framing of British art as 'committed to neither' America nor Europe would become a key question, and problem, for the magazine's evolution from the last years of the 1960s into the beginning of the 70s; from a sustained attention to British art's relationship with America, to a turn towards the European art world, especially art coming out of West Germany. The critical attention of the magazine cannot, therefore, be understood independently of an account of the shift in the balance of influence between the US and Europe; the art and art criticism of this period is marked by, amongst other pressures, the oscillating attention between American and European forms of artistic practice.

By the late 1960s, developments in art beyond an established set of modernist forms and critical criteria were beginning to be felt even in mainstream discussions. The vexed question of what constituted art – material form or idea – was no longer easily avoided. With the important Richard Hamilton-organised retrospective of Marcel Duchamp's work at the Tate Gallery in the summer of 1966, *The Times's* art critic Edward Lucie-Smith could confidently declare that Duchamp:

[...] is a sphinx who asks the right questions. One these questions, quite simply, is: "What is a work of art?" With his famous "ready-mades",

⁷⁷ 'Editorial Statement'.

Duchamp seemed to put forward the idea that the artist's power of choice is, in fact, much more important than his power to make things in the physical sense.⁷⁸

'One is forced', Lucie-Smith continued, 'to argue that the object is not in fact the total work of art, but only a part of it... the thing we see before us completed by something entirely bodiless and abstract – an idea, or a set of ideas'.⁷⁹

We can find in this admission the beginning of an attention to the notion that ideas might go entirely in advance of the final shape of an artwork, rather than ideas working upon and established set of conventional forms. Lucie-Smith falls back to see this as a problem of artistic intention:

"Intention" is, of course one of the main stumbling blocks for the art critic who attempts to deal with modern art. The healthy critical impulse is to judge things in isolation: but more and more art seems to frustrate this. We discover we can judge success or failure of the work only if we know what intention subsumes it.⁸⁰

To 'judge things in isolation' here is a kind of code. It means being able to bring to bear on the work a set of criteria that are not the product or property of the artist, nor even in fact of the critic, but might be called upon from elsewhere, from some generally agreed consensus. The artist's 'intention', by contrast, comes to be seen as form of obscurity or opacity. This would not be the last time Lucie-Smith would be troubled by this difficulty: Having been engaged by Townsend to write for *Studio*, he would regularly return to the dislocation between artistic practice and the work of criticism, and the foreclosing of judgement. For example, writing on the painter Bernard Cohen's work at Kasmin gallery in 1967, he muses:

In fact, the paintings are not 'works of art' in the usual sense at all, but affidavits. They point out to us that a certain course of action has been pursued; they ask us to assume that this course of action has a value inherent in it which is meaningful to the spectator as well as to the artist. A

⁷⁸ Edward Lucie-Smith, 'The Spectator's Collaboration in Contemporary Art', *The Times* (London, 7 June 1966), p. 14.

⁷⁹ Lucie-Smith, 'The Spectator's Collaboration in Contemporary Art'.

⁸⁰ Lucie-Smith, 'The Spectator's Collaboration in Contemporary Art'.

large assumption, and certainly one that rules out any kind of judgement on my part.⁸¹

In a discussion of the work of Roy Ascott, Lucie-Smith again finds himself at a loss:

Roy Ascott, at the Hamilton Gallery, provides me with something of a puzzle. These enigmatic works consist of painted boards, cut into intricate shapes. I think of them as paintings, rather than sculpture [...] A coloured plane is put in front of a white one (the wall) and at times the white one is permitted to show through. But then? The transforming imagination [...] here seems to be pursuing a very hermetic path.⁸²

Similarly, in another review of 'constructionist' work, he concedes that 'Constructionism does, however, put the art-critic in rather a difficulty – he is reduced to describing his own sensations of space and movement, and distance.'⁸³

Lucie-Smith was not the only critic becoming perplexed about his role. Writing about the first show of the Group de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) at the newly opened Indica gallery, Cyril Barrett questioned the group's attachment to art as (in their words) 'an exclusively visual experience on the level of physiology rather than of emotion'. But, Barrett argued, 'where selecting, connecting, ordering and relating, and above all, activity are called for, the reaction cannot be *purely* physiological.' As a consequence:

All this poses a problem for the critic. What is he to criticize? The work? But there is, strictly speaking, no work, only the possibility of a work, or alternatively, a work which he himself has made. He may see it and see that it is good, but how can he say anything about the work that someone else may make out of the same situation?⁸⁴

If Lucie-Smith could not decipher the ordering logic behind the shaped planes he was looking at, it was perhaps because he had no knowledge of the chance-based

⁸¹ Edward Lucie-Smith, 'London Commentary', *Studio International*, September 1967, 112.

⁸² Edward Lucie-Smith, 'London Commentary', *Studio International*, August 1967, 40.

⁸³ Edward Lucie-Smith, 'Flamboyance and Eclecticism', *Studio International*, June 1966, 265–265.

⁸⁴ Cyril Barrett, 'Mystification and the Groupe de Recherche', *Studio International*, August 1966, 93–95.

methods Ascott had employed to produce them.⁸⁵ Ascott's experiments in applying his interest in cybernetic theory to art-making are here inaccessible to the critic. And in both critics' cases, the apprehension that the object at hand could not be commented on because of how its effects compromised the critic's detachment, making it 'a work which he himself has made', or which necessitated 'describing one's own 'sensations of space and movement', begins to imply the redundancy of the activity of critical commentary.

These failures are not simply due to being weak forms of criticism, or the product of hurried journalistic inattention. They suggest a form of commentary that is no longer certain that it shares the critical assumptions of the work's producer. Lucie-Smith's commentary, a few paragraphs earlier, has no trouble talking a language of formalist painting, in discussing the work of painter Michael Kidner: These are, by contrast, unthreatening works, in the sense that they conform to a range of discussible values: the colour is 'deeper and more resonant' than in previous works, there is a 'jarring dynamism' and there are 'opposing rhythms' in the compositions.⁸⁶ There are, in other words, things that can be talked about, and the function of identification, description and assessment of the critic can be accomplished, while the artist in question conforms to and confirms that range of 'speakable', identifiable properties.

In these we find a number of splits beginning to occur in the relationship between artistic practice and the conduct of critical discourse. In the case of Lucie-Smith, artists such as Ascott and Cohen are developing theoretical and critical programmes influenced by disciplines outside of the orthodoxy of modernist and formalist critical attention, rendering that descriptive and evaluative vocabulary difficult to deploy. In Barrett's case, the critic's more lucid comprehension of the artists' programme – that the work should precisely refuse the attention of a 'cultivated' eye – led him to recognise the potential loss of the mediation between looking and speaking, or more precisely, experiencing and reflecting, since the kind of experience being directed at the viewer by the artist was one deliberately orchestrated to avoid mediation itself, and the literary mediations of a 'cultured'

⁸⁵ See Edward A. Shanken, 'From Cybernetics to Telematics: The Art, Pedagogy and Theory of Roy Ascott', in *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness*, by Roy Ascott (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 1–96.

⁸⁶ Lucie-Smith, 'London Commentary', p. 42.

subject. Barrett cites GRAV's manifesto 'Enough of Mystification', which demands 'no more [art] production for: the cultivated eye, the sensitive eye; the intellectual eye; the aesthetic eye; the dilettante eye'.⁸⁷

The notion that an artist might direct the critical terms of their work, or that there might be some form of breakdown in the exchange between work and text, or between visuality and language, was a situation whose implications were not easily recognised. For Charles Harrison, writing in the 2000s a retrospective account of his own 'crisis of criticism' and his first engagements with conceptualism in the late 1960s, the distinction of criticism from practice was symptomatic of a problem within modernism:

To conceive of criticism as a literary practice distinct from the self-criticism of the studio was to assume that some justifiable difference in function served to insulate writing about art from making it. By the end of the 1960s, this assumption seemed no longer to be tenable. And to ask why was to confront an assumption operating at a deeper level: the assumption, fundamental to modernist theory, that art and language are related in a dichotomous hierarchy.⁸⁸

Harrison restricts his definition of modernism to abstract art in particular, whose supposedly particular difficulty required exceptional critical advocacy that was obliged to 'stress abstract art's radically un-language like properties'.⁸⁹ It was this work, and the formalist criticism that complemented it, that Harrison had initially admired when joining *Studio* as assistant editor in 1967. Harrison goes on to argue that the problem with art criticism at the time 'lay in the language itself – and in the assumptions that were built into it concerning the division of cultural labour'.⁹⁰ That division of labour concerned the articulation of a certain kind of sensibility:

What I had formerly regarded as the first-order culture of art – the culture of art as ineffable effect – seemed simply to have been evacuated, at least so far as concerned the useful purposes of criticism. It was indicative of this

⁸⁷ Barrett.

⁸⁸ Harrison, 'Feeling the Earth Move', p. 133. The essay is the first published version of a lecture first given in 2001, and then extended for a lecture in 2004. See introductory note, p. 127.

⁸⁹ 'Feeling the Earth Move', p. 133.

⁹⁰ 'Feeling the Earth Move', p. 133.

evacuation that such categories as 'feeling', 'sensibility' and 'experience' could no longer be plausibly cited in justification of the work of art.⁹¹

Here, it is the use of criticism to report a form of *subjectivity* that appears no longer to be tenable. To follow Harrison, a certain set of assumptions about subjectivity – feeling, sensibility, experience – are analogous with a particular form of writing about artworks, artworks whose significance is to be found in 'purely' visual form. Modernist criticism is here the association of particular formal qualities with a spectrum of subjective values, codified in language by the critic. In this 'division of labour', the artist is eclipsed by the priority of the relationship of the critic's attention to the work.

'Not only by the critics but by the artists themselves': the development of the artist's voice in Studio

But if 'criticism as a literary practice' could not be distinguished from the self-criticism of the artist, then writing about art would soon start to lose its insulation from making art. What Harrison criticises as the 'dichotomous hierarchy' of art and language, and the critical codification of the experience of visual form, is not straightforwardly contained in a reductive opposition of the 'division of labour' between artist and critic, since in *Studio* the 'self-criticism of the studio' was beginning to appear alongside the critic's voice. While the form of the critical review or critic's profile of an artist's work continued, a notable shift in *Studio's* editorial direction under Townsend's editorship is the emphasis given to the artist's voice, first in the form of the artist's interview, but increasingly in the artist's statement regarding their own work, and in the form of critical writing by writers who are themselves practicing artists.

So from 1966 and into 1968 one finds interviews with Anthony Caro, Duchamp, Anthony Hill, René Magritte, Bridget Riley, Ad Reinhart, Kim Lim and John Latham.⁹² While these and other texts often stage the conventional form of a

⁹¹ 'Feeling the Earth Move', p. 135.

⁹² 'Anthony Caro: Interviewed by Andrew Forge', *Studio International*, January 1966, 6–9; Dore Ashton, 'Interview with Marcel Duchamp', *Studio International*, June 1966, 244–47; 'Anthony Hill Interviewed by Kenneth Frampton', *Studio International*, 172 (1966), 200–201; 'Conversation with René Magritte', *Studio International*, March 1967, 128–31; 'Bridget Riley Interviewed by David Sylvester', *Studio International*, March 1967, 132–35; 'Interview

dialogue between a critic-interviewer and the artist, there begins to be a move to emphasising the artist's voice, in texts where the artist's words have been recorded and presented as monologue. A long article titled 'Naum Gabo talks about his work', for example, is an edited transcript of several different interviews, while Philip King is similarly presented as if speaking in the first person, in transcript, or as a first-person written statement.⁹³

This evolution away from the critic's interlocutor position, and towards the direct address of the artist, would develop further in the issues of 1968 and 1969. Increasingly, the editorial convention of presenting artists' monologues as if in reported speech would give way to direct statements by artists about the ideas that informed their work. These artist-authored statements are sometimes prefaced by an introduction written by a critic, and in those cases the artist's text is often biographical: so while Alan Davie can reminisce lyrically about his childhood ('Father, being a painter gave me one day some paints and a canvas, and I was able to approach the temple doors of this unknown dreamworld'⁹⁴), Alan Bowness does the evaluating: 'Granted enormous differences between the artists it is nevertheless a progression analogous to Van Gogh's.'⁹⁵ Elsewhere, the ICA's curator of exhibitions Jasia Reichardt introduces a text by the cybernetics-influenced painter and musician Peter Schmidt, who recalls his development through art school to how he arrived at his present working methods.⁹⁶ (Schmidt had worked on the music programme of Reichardt's exhibition, 'Cybernetic Serendipity', that summer.⁹⁷)

The critic's preface, however, quickly gave way to more direct writing by artists, often in the form of programmatic or manifesto-like statements. For example, in addition to an article on the performance artist Mark Boyle by Reichardt, two

with Ad Reinhardt', *Studio International*, December 1967, 269–73; Gene Baro, 'Work of Kim Lim', *Studio International*, November 1968, 186–89; 'Where Does the Collision Happen?: John Latham in Conversation with Charles Harrison', *Studio International*, May 1968, 258–61.

⁹³ 'Naum Gabo Talks about His Work', *Studio International*, April 1966, 127–31; 'Phillip King Talks about His Sculpture', *Studio International*, June 1968, 300–305.

⁹⁴ Alan Davie, 'Autobiographical Note: I Confess', *Studio International*, September 1966, 117–21.

⁹⁵ Alan Bowness, 'Autobiographical Note: I Confess', *Studio International*, September 1966, 117–21.

⁹⁶ 'A Is Different but the B Remains the Same', *Studio International*, November 1968, 190–91.

⁹⁷ See 'Brian Eno, Peter Schmidt, and Cybernetics', *Rhizome.org* <<http://rhizome.org/editorial/2009/oct/21/brian-eno-peter-schmidt-and-cybernetics/>> [accessed 18 June 2015].

written statements by Boyle are published.⁹⁸ And rather than quote the manifestoes of radical artists, those manifestoes and documents began to be published verbatim: a spread from December 1966 presents excerpts of papers presented at the controversial 'Destruction in Art Symposium' at the ICA, organised by Gustav Metzger, including Metzger's apocalyptic declaration that '[in] the context of the possible wipe-out of civilization, the study of aggression in man, and the psychological, biological economic drives to war, is possibly the most urgent work facing man.'⁹⁹

In some ways, *Studio* anticipated the development of publications that lent themselves entirely to projecting the work of artists in their own words, as well as through the reproduction of print; the New York publication *Avalanche*, for example, would launch in 1970, running until 1976, while Andy Warhol's *Interview* started in 1969. In Britain, the short-lived *Pages*, edited by David Briers, appeared in 1970, while William Furlong's *Audio Arts*, an audiocassette publication of artists' interviews published its first issue in January 1973.

Yet *Studio*'s turn to the artist's voice is in other ways more complicated and contradictory, since by admitting a greater presence to artists' contributions, it began to highlight and put under pressure the practical 'division of labour' on which a journal of criticism operates when its editorial brief is to comment (critically) on the activity of a particular discipline, culture or field of knowledge. Townsend's emphasis that the British art scene should 'be reported and commented upon not only the critics but by the artists themselves' precipitated a greater attention to artists speaking about their own work in their own voice, but also a greater openness to artists deliberating theoretical questions, as well as artists writing as critics and commentators themselves. From 1968 and into 1969, then, the waning influence of formalist criticism appears in *Studio* in parallel with the articulation of various critical positions based on critical and intellectual resources that lay beyond formalism's increasingly atrophied interaction between artwork, experience and discursive response, and this up-swell of critical commentary and theoretical presentation often comes in the writings of artists.

⁹⁸ Jasia Reichardt, 'On Chance and Mark Boyle', *Studio International*, October 1966, 164–65; 'Two Statements by Mark Boyle', *Studio International*, October 1966, 196–97.

⁹⁹ Gustav Metzger, 'Excerpts from Selected Papers Presented at the 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium', *Studio International*, December 1966, 282–282.

Throughout 1968 and 1969 *Studio* gave voice to the growing sense that traditional definitions of art specified by particular forms were in a state of crisis, and that the tradition of criticism which had delimited and grounded these was itself suspect. Yet the crisis of artistic form and the problems of art's criticism are not played out evenly or quite in parallel across those two years, as the magazine shifts its attention from a broader European context of activity in 1968 to a closer attention to American activities throughout 1969. If issues of *Studio* during 1968 reflect the ferment and aftermath of the events around May 1968, in Paris and to a lesser extent in London, those of 1969 are significant for their receding attention towards the Parisian artistic scene, and the extended attention towards New York. While the gravity of the cultural and political crisis in France was acutely felt in artistic circles in Paris – a situation articulately witnessed by Michel Claura in his Paris Commentaries for *Studio* – *Studio's* focus shifts notably away from radical artistic developments on the continent as the controversies generated by its coverage of American Minimalism and conceptualism unfolded. European artistic developments would return to the magazine's attention later, in the activities of German and north European artists.

Over 1968, however, the problems of criticism were focused largely around the publication of the first substantial articles critical of Clement Greenberg, specifically Patrick Heron's 'A Kind of Cultural Imperialism', and Barbara Reise's two-part essay 'Greenberg and the Group'. In questions of artistic form, by contrast, critical preoccupations focused on the effects of technology on human experience and individuality. It is worth surveying these together, since while the attacks on Greenberg appear more vividly, the multiplicity of artistic activities covered revealed, collectively, a broader cultural change in attention that would serve to undermine formalist criticism's organisation of the relationship between visual form and subjective experience.

1968: Criticism of critics

1968 opened with Lucie-Smith's interview with Clement Greenberg, the introduction of which lauds Greenberg as 'the most influential critic of modern art now writing'.¹⁰⁰ The text, a set of transcript fragments, focuses almost entirely on

¹⁰⁰ Lucie-Smith, 'Interview with Clement Greenberg'.

matters of precedence between national artistic cultures. Greenberg is at once gracious and condescending, dismissing Henry Moore and Francis Bacon, while lauding the 'younger Englishmen' who are 'doing the best sculpture in the world today'. 'You put up with a lot of crap from your art critics', he declares, while offering magnanimously that 'it may be up to the milieu formed by the new English sculptors to save the avant-garde.' He derides 'novelty art', while brushing aside the question of what defines 'avant-garde': 'you don't define it, you recognize it as a historical phenomenon", he states. Asked about American 'parochialism', Greenberg complains that American art's success has produced an aggressive, loud, confident 'American chauvinism'.

Regardless of his various qualifications and gestures of praise towards the English 'New Generation' of sculpture and Anthony Caro, Greenberg's assertive, matter-of-fact judgements on American, British and European art were easy to read as an act of paternalism, not merely by an art critic, but a critic who represented the hegemony of America cultural power. In his comments, Greenberg needed an old disagreement; reflecting on the reception of American painting in France and Britain, Greenberg notes that 'English awareness came slightly later... But it was keener, and contained more insight'. 'Whether they [English abstractionists] or the French saw it first, doesn't matter – I don't quite know why Patrick Heron has made such a fuss about that'.

The following issue carried a lengthy, furious attack on Greenberg by Heron, under the headline 'A kind of cultural imperialism?'¹⁰¹ Heron attacks both the Greenberg interview and an earlier piece on British painting by critic Gene Baro. Baro's concern, Heron writes, is the 'recording of American influence [on British painters]... rather than the unbiased study of what we are all doing here in Britain; while Greenberg, in his 'massacring' of 'a whole national group', 'could not have presented us with a more perfect example of ... 'cultural imperialism''. Heron's diatribe vibrates with indignation at Greenberg's 'critical 'empire building', his dismissal of Moore seen as a calculated attack at a time when 'many of the younger artists in this country are very critical of, or indifferent to, the sculpture of Henry Moore'. Heron refers to a 'rather shameful letter to *The Times*': this open letter, signed by a roll call of 'younger' British artists (including Caro, many of the 'New Generation' sculptors and painters associated with the 1960 exhibition *Situation*)

¹⁰¹ Heron, 'A Kind of Cultural Imperialism?'

cautioned against Moore's offer to donate over 20 'major works' to the Tate, warning the Tate against 'devoting itself so massively to the work of a single artist'.¹⁰²

Heron's retort is full of pique and territorialism, rankling over the privileging of the post-Caro sculptors and *Situation* painters over the 'middle generation' of English painters and sculptors, and the sense that a critic could anoint a group of artists as part of an international hierarchy whose pinnacle was New York. Heron's smear of 'imperialism' was opportunistic and confused, but it intimated how the internationalisation of modernist art as a history and a set of concerns would subordinate national or local artistic cultures. For younger artists, however, Heron's own chauvinism was at odds with that the positive aspect of that internationalism: in the following issue, the recently London-settled American painter and critic Suzi Gablik criticised *Studio's* publication of Heron's 'maniac ravings', insisting that if the best art was currently American, this was simply a matter of fact, not an issue of competing nationalisms.¹⁰³ Still, while Heron's polemic made no attempt to comment on Greenberg's form of criticism itself, it caught the mood of the growing disenchantment with the power of critics in dictating the fortunes of artists.

Barbara Reise's two-part essay 'Greenberg and the Group: a retrospective', published in May and June, offered a more impersonal, historical critique of the institutionalisation of Greenberg's reputation. Reise offers a compact history of Greenberg's rise to prominence in the 50s, his disputes with other New York critics of Abstract Expressionism, and his fostering of his own academic legitimacy through his 'Harvard-student disciples', Rosalind Krauss, Jane Harrison Cone and Michael Fried. Reise's article traced Greenberg's shift from committed, involved critic to hardened dogmatist:

¹⁰² See 'Henry Moore's Gift', *The Times* (London, 26 May 1967), p. 11. The signatories were: Craigie Aitchison, David Annesley, Gillian Ayres, Anthony Benjamin, Derek Boshier, Anthony Caro, Patrick Caulfield, Bernard Cohen, Harold Cohen, Garth Evans, Sheila Fell, Elisabeth Frink, Patrick George, Anthony Hill, Howard Hodgkin, Malcolm Hughes, Gwyther Irwin, Tess Jaray, Allan Jones, Michael Kidner, Phillip King, John Latham, Francis Morland, Henry Mundy, Myles Murphy, Eduardo Paolozzi, John Plumb, Tim Scott, Peter Sedgley, Peter Snow, Peter Startup, Joe Tilson, William Tucker, William Turnbull, Michael Tyzack, Euan Uglow, Marc Vaux, Brian Wall, Gillian Wise, Anthony Wishaw and Brian Young.

¹⁰³ Suzi Gablik, 'An Embarrassment of Criticism', *Studio International*, March 1968, 113.

In the 'forties, and to a lesser degree in the 'fifties, it had been obviously passionate, avowedly personal, conveying a real impression of direct confrontation with his artistic enthusiasms. In the 'sixties it has become more didactic, concerned with philosophy and history, removed from concrete aesthetic encounters, and seemingly sure of its own objectivity.¹⁰⁴

Reise's footnote-heavy article made evident to a British readership the controversy that now dogged Greenberg's influence in America, when it had been so readily assimilated in Britain. Greenberg's belated influence in Britain was due to his own professional reinvention, but it also had much to do with the fading of an older generation of British critical and artistic modernism. Greenberg's collected essays *Art and Culture* had been published in 1961, and his championing of Anthony Caro, Caro's influential teaching at St Martins and the success of the 'New Generation' sculptors repositioned the critic among a younger generation of artists than Heron's 'middle generation'. By contrast, influential British critics belonged to an earlier generation, and were fading away or were leaving: Clive Bell had died in 1964, Herbert Read died in June 1968. The more radical Lawrence Alloway had moved to New York in 1961.

'Greenberg and the Group' offers a insistent historical account of Greenberg's success, and begins a tentative critique of his position, surveying the growing criticisms of Greenberg in the American press and writing approvingly of the move to take mixed-media and Pop art seriously: Reise refers particularly to critic Barbara Rose's 'positive suggestions that new comers to criticism look to other models and consider art in terms of its 'horizontal' rather than 'vertical' historic relationships.'¹⁰⁵

Reise's own criticism centred on Greenberg's 'increasingly defensive and academic stance against the subjective nature of aesthetic judgements',¹⁰⁶ arguing that Greenberg consequently sought to further entrench his commitment to a theory of progressive historical artistic development by drawing on the art historical theory of Heinrich Wöllflin. Yet there was no contradiction between subjective judgement

¹⁰⁴ Reise, 'Greenberg and the Group', p. 255.

¹⁰⁵ Reise, 'Greenberg and the Group', p. 315.

¹⁰⁶ Barbara M. Reise, 'Greenberg and the Group: A Retrospective View: Part 1', *Studio International*, May 1968, 254–57 (p. 255).

and objective historical value in Greenberg's eyes. A few months before, in *Artforum*, Greenberg had defended his approach, asserting:

'That qualitative principles or norms are there somewhere, in subliminal operation, is certain; otherwise aesthetic judgments would be purely subjective ... Yet these objective qualitative principles, such as they are, remain hidden from discursive consciousness.'¹⁰⁷

There is an obvious tension in such a formulation, between subjective response and its justification in objective criteria, and it is particularly interesting for this discussion that Greenberg wished to defend his criticism from accusations of the 'purely subjective' by arguing that objective criteria were there somewhere, informing subjective response, 'in subliminal operation', yet 'hidden from discursive consciousness'. What this defends against is the accusation that subjective judgements should be arbitrary or entirely idiosyncratic – of no public significance. In this model the unconscious is, it turns out, the place where objective criteria are installed.

Greenberg's peculiar conflation of objectivity and subjectivity, subordinating reflection to immediacy, has the effect of reducing critical activity to the reflex action of an unconscious, one instilled with the historically objective criteria of artistic value that were themselves beyond discussion. As such it allowed little scope for speculation, doubt or self-questioning within the practice of 'discursive consciousness'. An extended examination of Greenberg's ideas about immediacy and experience is beyond my scope here, but it is important to note how even here, the critic's activity is reduced to a machine-like automatism, in which 'discursive consciousness' turns out to be merely the subjective channel for the objective and impersonal forces of historical progress. Greenberg rebuked his critics for '[taking] for granted that aesthetic judgements are voluntary... [and] that aesthetic judgements are *rational as well as voluntary*, that they are weighted and pondered'.¹⁰⁸ That Greenberg should reach for a model of subjectivity founded on the unconscious is not exactly controversial for the period, of course. What is interesting is that while the critic could grasp for it as a way to excuse himself, opportunistically, of the burden of responsibility for his judgements, it nevertheless

¹⁰⁷ Clement Greenberg, 'Complaints of an Art Critic', in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 265–72 (p. 265).

¹⁰⁸ Greenberg, p. 269. My emphasis

echoed a wider problem regarding the critic's role in deliberating – freely – the character and value of subjective experience, at a time when issues of individual freedom and subjective intention were put into question.

While Greenberg's 'Complaints' provoked angry correspondence in *Artforum*, Reise's article did not meet with a response in the pages of *Studio*. Leading into the summer issue, the magazine turned its attention to the Hornsey College of Art occupation, and by the autumn of 1968 the aftermath of the Paris *événements* of May was beginning to be reported.¹⁰⁹ When the issue of criticism returned early in 1969, it was as satire: 'Towards a definition of trends in American football uniforms: an exercise in a certain kind of art criticism', by the young American painter and critic Peter Plagens, was a parody of Greenbergian and Friedlandian critical solemnity in which the vocabulary of their formalist criticism was diverted towards the subject of American football uniform design: 'The success, even the survival, of the modern(ist) professional football uniform, has come increasingly to depend on its ability to defeat design, to remain free from literal(ist) decoration while maintaining team identification,' Plagens intones, closing with the punch-line, 'the fourth quarter is grace.'¹¹⁰ That formalist criticism could be so easily generated as parody suggested that its discursive conventions and the objects they attended to had become fixed in a closed loop, in which certain kind of objects confirms a certain kind of subjective critical attention. Outside of that loop, however other developments were putting into question the technological limitations of modern art, the technical prescription of painting and sculpture and the static nature of its objects. At the same time, arguments for the obsolescence of the techniques and media of modernist art were allied with a changing idea of the human individual, in which technology and media converged on human experience to emphasise immersion and immediacy, and in which critical distance would be replaced by the cybernetic concept of feedback. Ironically, Greenberg's increasingly sclerotic refusal to engage a criticism of speculative self-questioning, and his celebration of the involuntary and objective nature of aesthetic experience would merely confirm, and be eclipsed by, the emerging fascination with technologically advanced

¹⁰⁹ See Jean Clay and Robert Kudielka, 'Politics and Art', *Studio International*, September 1968, 62–63.

¹¹⁰ Peter Plagens, 'Towards a Definition of Trends in American Football Uniforms: An Exercise in a Certain Kind of Art Criticism', *Studio International*, February 1969, 96–97.

generators of aesthetic experience and a new idea of the human subject's response to it.

1968: art and the technological society

Writing in the *British Journal of Aesthetics* in 1967, the painter and critic Kenneth Coutts-Smith voices a typical concern about the changes in human experience wrought by a new understanding of the world after the scientific revolutions of the twentieth century:

When the physicists began to discover that matter was not what it appears to be, that the seemingly solid consists of waves and charged particles – often paradoxically both at the same time – our feelings about an objectively perceived environment, indeed about our subjective physical presence, began to change. If matter was not to be seen as real in terms of sense-data, could it possibly be recorded in the objective terms of a traditional language whose vocabulary was that of so-called solid objective matter? Could artists still think in terms of Euclidean geometry and three-dimensional spatial relationships?¹¹¹

Coutts-Smith was not alone in this preoccupation with the destabilising effect of science and technology on both 'objective matter' and 'subjective physical presence'. One of the more prominent themes in *Studio's* coverage during 1968 turns around the fascination with modern technological forms of visual experience – technologies of effect that cast doubt on the privileged status of painting, while seeing its failure principally in terms of its technical archaism in a world where the individual found himself subject to new techniques and economies of cultural production. A similar technology-driven scepticism erodes the status of sculpture, now seen as the static, inert precursor to new forms of kinetic, temporary and transient event-forms, which are here positioned as authentic responses to, and representatives of, an unstable and dynamic technological modernity. As Willoughby Sharp would declare in his article 'Air Art':

¹¹¹ Kenneth Coutts-Smith, 'Art and Contemporary Science', *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 7.2 (1967), 189–94.

Art's enemy is the object. Reality is events, not objects. Static structures are anachronisms. They are irrelevant to today's cultural and technological situation. It's idiotic to make such objects as art now.¹¹²

Earlier, painter Harold Cohen could complain of his sense of the redundancy of painting in the face of the technologically advanced sound-and-image installations on view at Montreal's *Expo 67*, realising the 'private' nature of painting compared to 'an increasing tendency in art to 'go public'.¹¹³ Reflecting on the development of his own work, artist P.K. Hoenich would write that:

... as time passed... I came more and more to question the inadequacy of still pictures in the contemporary world, the value of pigments and brushes and oils as techniques for today. Space travel, atomic physics, the developments of science and technology, compete for people's interest. Can paintings compete with their images, or reach people conditioned by cinema and television to movement and change?¹¹⁴

In February, Eddie Wolfram profiled the work of Roy Ascott, arguing that 'here in our new world of televideo fact and computed facilitation, in this cybernate situation where light is impulse, the image activator and SPACE activated, all simultaneously, simple metaphysical and plastic aesthetic about visual phenomena becomes inadequate and verges on obsolescence.'¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, the artist appeared in the new role of social engineer, the purpose and effect of art transferred from the tradition of aesthetic reflection to a field of utopian instrumentality, the artist rising to the challenge of a modernity whose experience is seen in increasingly apocalyptic terms. Jasia Reichardt, tireless enthusiast for technological art, quotes Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Kluver's Experiments in Art and Technology group (E.A.T.); "Artists and engineers are becoming aware of their crucial role in changing the human environment and the

¹¹² Willoughby Sharp, 'Air Art', *Studio International*, May 1968, pp. 262–65.

¹¹³ Harold Cohen, 'Comment', *Studio International*, January 1968, 2–3; a similar observation of the development of multi-screen presentation at *Expo '67* is made by the American art historian Leo Steinberg. Steinberg discusses the retroactive value of contemporary developments on the study of historical techniques e.g. multi-part altarpiece painting. See 'Objectivity and the Shrinking Self', in *Other Criteria : Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 307–21.

¹¹⁴ P.K. Hoenich, "'Robot Art": Using the Rays of the Sun', *Studio International*, June 1968, 306–8 (p. 306).

¹¹⁵ Eddie Wolfram, 'The Ascott Galaxy', *Studio International*, February 1968, pp. 60–61.

relevant forces shaping our society".¹¹⁶ For Wolfram, Ascott presented the question of 'how and what, in the middle of the twentieth century, we conceive the function of art activity to be? How, today, can the artist operate in a pertinent relationship to society?'¹¹⁷ The French critic Pierre Restany, in typical hyperbole, reported on César's polyurethane 'expansions' performance at the Tate: 'These instant sculptures must be considered his personal statements on the effective power of contemporary technology. They are also a part of a broader vision of the world, an act of faith in the new function of the artist in our changing society.'¹¹⁸

These were not, in the most part, substantially developed systems of argument that might be understood as an elaborated 'theory' of art. They nevertheless drew on various theoretical resources that, while external to the orthodox critical resources associated with art at that time, were part of the broader cultural discourses of the period: for example, the attention to the mass-media, already influenced by the efforts of the British pop art movement driven by the Independent Group in the 1950s and early 1960s, was given further currency by the influential and popular writing of Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan, who appears as a frequent, if distant, figure of authority in *Studio* during 1968 and 1969. *Understanding Media* had been published in 1964, and McLuhan's quizzical, laconic prognostications regarding how human experience is reshaped by the technologies of communication chimed with the widespread sense that science, technology and media, if not consciously harnessed, threatened human freedom.¹¹⁹ The artist, however, was given a special status in resisting this: reviewing McLuhan's recent publications (tellingly headlined 'Media Crises'), Andrew Forge wrote approvingly that for McLuhan the artist was 'the man of integral awareness', and 'the person ... able to assess what is happening to himself and to the quality of life'.¹²⁰

Complementing McLuhanite theories of media overload, and the vision of the artist as a holistic social engineer rather than a rarefied aesthetic technician, was the currency of systems-based theories, particularly the cybernetics pioneered by Norbert Weiner, and which was a founding element in the work of an artist such as

¹¹⁶ Jasia Reichardt, 'EAT and after', *Studio International*, May 1968, 236–37.

¹¹⁷ Wolfram, 'The Ascott Galaxy'.

¹¹⁸ Pierre Restany, 'Modern Magic at the Tate', *Studio International*, June 1968, 332–33.

¹¹⁹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

¹²⁰ Andrew Forge, 'Media Crises', *Studio International*, March 1968, 60–61.

Ascott.¹²¹ More generally, the interest in notions of feedback and a techno-informational understanding of sensory experience underlies the preoccupation with innovations in aesthetic technology – in light-art or kinetic art, for example.

Beneath these volatile speculations was the apprehension that modernist artistic techniques could not respond adequately to the invasive subjective effects of new technologies and media. But beneath this lay a more fundamental uncertainty about the subject's authority over speaking or reflecting about experience. Those motifs sourced from cybernetics and systems theory – of complex causality within extensive interconnected networks – tended to downgrade questions of individual autonomy and freedom, but the idea that people were no longer 'in control' of the systems and technologies they had created was a pervasive cultural preoccupation of the late 1960s. In economics, the popular and influential US economist J.K. Galbraith could argue that advanced capitalism has become a matter largely of technical and administrative competence and planning, in which the notion of the self-willing individual was an increasingly illusory figure. In his 1966 BBC Reith lectures *The New Industrial State*, Galbraith sardonically described the interdependent functioning of the modern state and the modern corporation:

Together these provide a comprehensive planning apparatus. Together they decide what people should have and arrange that they will get it – and that they will want it. Not the least of its achievements is in leaving them with the impression that the controlling decision is theirs.¹²²

Galbraith's demotion of the rational, choice-making subject of classical economics was part of a broader tendency to re-conceptualise the subject that occurs across 60s culture and scientific and cultural discourse. Ascott's early writings, for example, frame his approach as 'Behaviourist art', echoing the 'Behaviourist' psychology of the American B.F. Skinner, whose influential approach eschewed a psychology of cognition and intention in favour of a deterministic model of environmental necessity on human action and reaction, in which consciousness

¹²¹ Ascott's teaching influence students who subsequently developed cybernetic theory in their own work as artists and musicians: artist Steven Willatts and The Who's Pete Townshend were both taught by Ascott at Ealing Art College; Brian Eno attended Ipswich Civic College.

¹²² John Kenneth Galbraith, *The New Industrial State: The Role of the State*, The Reith Lectures, 6 vols., 1966, iv <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00hbc47>> [accessed 26 June 2015]; see also John Kenneth Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

and intentionality was regarded as irrelevant. (Ascott's utopian cybernetic vision of an expanded human consciousness enabled by informational feedback may have differed from Skinner's utilitarian downplaying of free will, but the conceptualisation of a subject intimately connected to its environment and conditioned by its interactions was a common theme.¹²³) So while Forge could sound alarmed at McLuhan's suggestion that men might become the 'servo-mechanisms of machines',¹²⁴ Dore Ashton was quick to note the arrival of the 'death of the author': reviewing Brian O'Doherty's *Aspen* magazine, which included the first English publication of Roland Barthes's essay 'The Death of the Author', Ashton notes that for Barthes, 'it is language that speaks, not the man'.¹²⁵

1969: Artists as theorists – Buren, Beiderman, Kosuth?

In the preceding section I have outlined a particular climax in artistic attention throughout 1968, given attention in *Studio*, in which the technological and scientific developments of post-war society played a part in eroding the strict limitation of modern art to the historical techniques associated with painting and sculpture. At the same time, the influence of discourses drawn from the sciences and social sciences began to alter concepts of human subjectivity, in which responsiveness, feedback, immediacy and a functional, interventionist role for art and the artist came to the fore.

This techno-utopianism would be short-lived. Since it lacked a political dimension other than a diffuse sense of emancipation through a social paradigm change and a technologically enabled change in human consciousness, it would be vulnerable to the more acute political climate that developed in wake of the events of the summer of 1968 in Paris and elsewhere, while the beginnings of a period of conflict in industrial relations in Britain would give the lie to technocratic narratives of the planned economy and indefinite economic growth. What survived of it, however, was the collapse of medium-specificity and the genre limits and self-reference of earlier modernist practice, and the expansion of material practices drawn from contemporary social reality. Of equal significance was its introduction of new ways

¹²³ See Roy Ascott, 'Behaviourist Art and the Cybernetic Vision (1966-67)', in *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 109–56.

¹²⁴ Forge, 'Media Crises'.

¹²⁵ Dore Ashton, 'New York Commentary', *Studio International*, 175.900 (1968), 272–73.

of thinking about human experience. But as I set out below, this shift was to a large extent eclipsed by the growing attention paid not to questions of the definition of human experience, but to the questioning of the definition of the art object. Instead of the diffuse cacophony of artists' voices that characterised *Studio* previously, the magazine through 1969 is notable for its 'special' issues on sculpture, and by the emerging attention to a particular 'analytical' form of conceptual art, whose preoccupation was the relationship was the precedence of conceptual definition over the material artwork.

Studio's January 1969 issue was a focus on British sculpture. But much as it celebrated the achievements of Anthony Caro and the 'New Generation' of sculptors who had emerged from St Martins College during the 60s, there is a sense of terminus to the opinions voiced, and a desire for a new direction. In the lengthy 'symposium' conversation, Roelof Louw could remark 'I feel completely oppressed by Caro's sculptural criteria. I mean at the moment. It's like being swamped with it. I think it's a question of finding something that is distinctly different from his criteria'¹²⁶ That these new directions were to be found coming out of St Martins was testament, according to David Annesley, to Caro's openness to experimentation, encouraging the question 'Can you make it out of anything?'¹²⁷

Ironically, it was that openness that, according to Harrison, precipitated the unravelling of the 'object quality of hermetic sculpture and the exclusiveness of its audience' towards its dispersal into its context of presentation, and towards the metaphysical. Writing appreciatively of Barry Flanagan, Richard Long, Louw and Bruce McLean, Harrison would contend that '... where the sculpture of the New Generation works as person to person, physically, the sculpture of younger artists like Long works as person to person metaphysically.'¹²⁸ These artists were exemplary of the version of 'expanded' sculpture that was emerging in the British context, an approach which paid 'increasing attention ... to states and processes rather than things and phenomena.'¹²⁹

¹²⁶ 'Anthony Caro's Work: A Symposium by Four Sculptors', *Studio International*, January 1969, 14–20 (p. 20).

¹²⁷ 'Anthony Caro's Work', p. 19.

¹²⁸ Charles Harrison, 'Some Recent Sculpture in Britain', *Studio International*, January 1969, 26–33 (p. 33).

¹²⁹ Harrison, 'Some Recent Sculpture in Britain', p. 30.

That change in attention was much to do with an acute sense of the limits of the terminology of what sculpture had been deemed to be up until then – terminology which finds its confident reiteration in the ‘symposium’, where the talk is about planes, volume, direction, the articulation of the space around the sculpture – sculpture which, according to Annesley, ‘evokes feeling responses in us, and seems to be the container of those feelings as well.’¹³⁰

But a commitment to something as intangible as ‘feeling’ could not compete against the growing interest in the terminological and institutional conventions of art objects. In this, Michel Claura’s ‘Paris commentary’ dedicated to the recent activities of Daniel Buren and his colleagues in their group BMPT¹³¹ (though this group name is not mentioned here), Claura noted that their paintings:

... are completely lacking in sensitivity. Humour, discomfort, anxiety, joy, calm, serenity – every human feeling is absent. This first point alone challenges our basic concept of art.¹³²

Contra to this ‘basic concept of art’, the work of these artists ‘no longer represents, no longer expresses’. And by devolving the making of their paintings to others, ‘they had in fact eliminated the artists’ ‘expression, since whoever produces one of these is not expressing himself.’¹³³

Claura concluded that Buren ‘continues to prove that it is possible to elaborate a practical theory in art, on condition that one ceases to be just an artist, or in other worlds, that one has a *total* and specific vision of the innumerable problems posed by the work and its communication.’¹³⁴ This ‘total’ grasp seems to awe the critic, in its implications for how the role of the artist should be understood: ‘Clearly it is no longer an artist talking but a theoretician. Theory and Art are incompatible,’ Claura asserts, but this assertion of incompatibility seems hollow, compared to his otherwise emphatic enthusiasm for the implications of Buren’s work.

¹³⁰ ‘Anthony Caro’s Work’, p. 19.

¹³¹ The members of BMPT were Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni. The collective work of the group focused on denying the individual authorship of each painter, while reducing the form of painting to an iteration of its formal and institutional conventions.

¹³² Claura, p. 48.

¹³³ Claura, p. 49.

¹³⁴ Claura, p. 49.

Claura's Paris commentary on Buren's painting, closing an issue otherwise dedicated to British sculpture, stands as the first sustained critical reflection in *Studio* on the emergence of artistic practices for whom the definitional conventions of art were the subject of the work. But the British discussions of sculpture's material limits and critical terms were pointing in a similar direction. These examples return us, also, to the shifting focus of influence between the artist and the critic within the forum of the art magazine context. Over the rest of 1969, this shifting would be played out in three further significant instances; the April issue focus on American Minimalism, the September focus on the American abstract artist Charles Biederman, and the publication, in October, of Joseph Kosuth's essay 'Art after Philosophy' and Victor Burgin's 'Situational Aesthetics'.

In each instance, the relationship between artist practice and its public articulation was negotiated across national, institutional and generational lines. So for the issue on Minimalism, *Studio* consciously (and tactically) gave a platform to Dan Flavin and Donald Judd to voice explicit criticism of the New York critical 'establishment' – of formalist criticism, Greenberg and *Artforum* magazine – while giving over space to the work of Flavin, Judd, Carl Andre, Robert Smithson and others. Barbara Riese's long feature, "'Untitled 1969': a footnote on art and minimal stylehood", did the job of introducing the work of these American artists whose work, as Harrison later noted, had not yet been seen in exhibition in Britain.¹³⁵

A different kind of belated reception of artistic developments is evident in the issue on Charles Biederman. The Biederman issue is interesting for how it positioned a relatively obscure artist in a history of transatlantic influence, and as another example of the artist-as-theorist, from which other artists draw influence. Biederman, an American who had briefly moved to Paris in 1936 before returning to America, had developed an approach which prioritised process and construction, drawing on the European non-objective art of Mondrian, de Stijl and others. While distant from the New York art world (he eventually settled in Red Wing, Minnesota), Biederman published, in 1948, *Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge*. This self-published book had, by the early 1950s, begun to be read by a circle of British artists, among them Victor Pasmore, Kenneth and Mary Martin, Gillian Wise and Anthony Hill.

¹³⁵ Barbara M. Riese, "'Untitled 1969': A Footnote on Art and Minimal Stylehood", *Studio International*, April 1969, 165–72.

The Biederman issue is significant as much for its articulation of generational and geographical influence as for its exposure of an unknown artist. (Biederman's coverage in *Studio* remains exceptional in an otherwise scant published literature.) It instead indicates Townsend's choice to support an artist associated with a tendency he was sympathetic to (in for example, *Studio*'s earlier coverage of Gabo), as well as his ability to collaborate with other institutional players – Townsend had orchestrated the issue to coincide with the Hayward Gallery's retrospective of Biederman's work, with Norbert Lynton's agreement.¹³⁶ It also bears witness to Townsend's commitment to sustaining an interest in the history of modernist art, and in representing the ideas of artists directly: as Wise observed in her contribution to the issue, 'It's probably difficult for students today to imagine how little information was readily available as little as ten years ago about most of the 'avant-gardists' of our recent past'.¹³⁷

Biederman's influence, such as it was, operated on a very narrow, but itself influential, cadre of artists. But what is relevant to this discussion was the issue of Biederman's influence as a theorist. For Hill, this meant the continuation of the history of artists who had become the theorists of artistic movements, citing the examples of Georges Mathieu and Victor Vasarely. Tying the revival of interest in Biederman's work to the revival of interest in Russian avant-garde movements, Hill could ask: 'Is the suggested revival of 'didactic' art a sign that *artist-theoreticians* will once again be countenanced?'

Hill, who had the previous year edited a collection of texts by constructionist and kinetic artists,¹³⁸ quotes approvingly from Jan van der Marck's introduction to Biederman's 1965 Walker Art Center retrospective:

Now the stylistic pendulum is again swinging in the direction of an art that values mediation over spontaneity, makes planning conditional to action and favours reason over emotion. We are again interesting ourselves in art that is cool, deliberate and methodical.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ See Melvin, p. 84.

¹³⁷ Gillian Wise, 'Notes on Biederman', *Studio International*, September 1969, 60.

¹³⁸ See *Data: Directions in Art, Theory and Aesthetics*, ed. by Anthony Hill (Faber & Faber, 1968).

¹³⁹ Jan van der Marck, quoted in Anthony Hill, 'Climate of Biederman', *Studio International*, September 1969, 68–70.

The designation of the 'artist-theoretician', then, was not to be separated from a rejection of artistic practice as spontaneous, intuitive, emotional and irrational. But although the September issue drew attention to the complex web of artist-centred historical contacts that might produce a lineage from Russian Constructivists to 1960s British Constructionist artists, and following from its coverage of minimalist art earlier in the year, *Studio* was also turning its attention to a younger generation of artists; the September issue also contains Harrison's article 'Against Precedents', written as the catalogue introduction for the ICA's staging of Harald Szeeman's exhibition 'When Attitudes Become Form', which Harrison had been invited to organise, adding a number of British artists to the group already assembled in Szeeman's original exhibition. Here, Harrison observed that 'virtually all the artists represented would appear to share a dissatisfaction with the status of the artwork as a particular object in a finite state, and a rejection of the notion of form as a specific and other identity to be imposed upon material.'¹⁴⁰ 'A medium', Harrison continued, 'is no more than the means of isolating, by emphasis, what has been selected or conceived.'

The focus on alternatives to medium-specificity and formal criteria meant that the question of subjective reception and response would remain in the background. While Harrison could talk vaguely about 'a changed consciousness' it was clear that the new art's primary interest lay in its capacity 'to stretch the range of our imagination and our conceptions', in which we might 'become involved in the special excitement of a process or the imaginative potency of information'.¹⁴¹ The definition and presence of objects, or their absence, was a matter for cognition and intellection, not a matter for subjective reflection on the formal complexities of a discrete work immediately available, or the complexities of one's own conscious attention to it.

An attention to the subjective side of the experience of art continued, only in a more objectified form. As I have outlined, *Studio's* attention to the writing and commentary of artists exposed its readership to those artists' expanding theoretical preoccupations. These writings were no longer individuated, personal justifications of intent or purpose, mediated or regulated by the discourse of the critic, but intended to be autonomous and generalising commentaries on the

¹⁴⁰ Charles Harrison, 'Against Precedents', *Studio International*, September 1969, 90–93 (p. 91).

¹⁴¹ Harrison, 'Against Precedents', p. 93.

identity of visual art as a whole. And the theoretical resources on which artists were increasingly drawing lay outside of the institutions of the art history academy and the tradition of formalism criticism, as artists turned to innovations in the social sciences and a broader and more nebulous social critique of contemporary Western industrial society. Developments in media theory, cybernetics and the theory of language and mind served to further objectify subjectivity as a field of rationalistic experiment and interrogation. In doing so, artists began to lay claim to the role of theorist, not merely by referring to theoretical sources in support of their work, but by synthesising such sources to make authoritative generalising claims about art to which their own work stood in parallel. This concluding section examines two exemplary articles in this regard; Burgin's 'Situational Aesthetics' and Kosuth's 'Art after Philosophy', both published in October 1969. Both Burgin and Kosuth were included in the ICA version of 'When Attitudes Become Form', which had opened on 28 August running to the end of September that year.

In 'Situational Aesthetics' Burgin offered a theoretical account of recent artistic developments from minimalism to conceptualism. Burgin's text weaves together many of the issues and preoccupations of those developments, but his emphasis in extending the notion of an 'object' away from a static materialistic account of things, towards an extended and relational definition of objects, was made in terms of a scientific account of the modalities of cognition and perception:

Accepting the shifting and ephemeral nature of perceptual experience, and if we accept that both real and conceptual objects are appreciated in an analogous manner, then it becomes reasonable to posit aesthetic objects that are located partly in real space and partly in psychological space. Such a placing of aesthetic objects however involves both a revised attitude toward materials and a reversal of function between these materials and their context.¹⁴²

Burgin's resort to scientific theories of perception distinguished his position from the more linguistic and analytical form of conceptualism touted by Kosuth and Art & Language, who had published the first issue of their Journal *Art-Language* in May 1969, which Burgin references. 'It in its logical extremity', he wrote, 'this tendency has resulted in a placing of art entirely within the linguistic infrastructure, which

¹⁴² Victor Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', *Studio International*, 178 (1969), 118–21 (p. 119).

previously served merely to support art.¹⁴³ By contrast, Burgin's article sought to undermine the conventional equation of certain types of object with 'art' by styling the designation of an object as 'art' as a form of learnt behaviour, so that:

The identification of art relies upon the recognition of cues that signal that the type of behaviour termed aesthetic appreciation is to be adopted.¹⁴⁴

Burgin's text astutely kept close to various current debates; mixing an awareness of phenomenology and the science of perception, Burgin aligned these with a suggestion of social and political opposition, framing anti-object practices as 'implicitly political', for superseding the 'vertical structuring' of 'historically given concepts of art and its cultural role'. Against such conventions, historical givens and socially learnt behavioural cues, Burgin could point to a 'laterally proliferating complex of activities that are united only in their common definition as products of artistic *behaviour*'.¹⁴⁵

By contrast, Kosuth's 'Art after Philosophy' is a complicated and often gnomic borrowing of Anglo-American philosophy to substantiate a post-Duchampian revision of the art object. Kosuth finds in the limits of nineteenth-century philosophy a correspondence with the 'beginning of art' – of what Kosuth terms the 'art condition'. Leaning heavily on the logical positivism of A.J. Ayer, Kosuth argues that art should be understood as distinct from aesthetics:

When objects are presented within the context of art [...] they are as eligible for aesthetic consideration as are any objects in the world, and an aesthetic consideration of an object existing in the realm of art means that the object's existence or functioning in an art context is irrelevant to the aesthetic judgment.¹⁴⁶

By prising the definition of art away from aesthetics, Kosuth's immediate target is formalist art. ('Formalist art (painting and sculpture) is the vanguard of decoration.'¹⁴⁷) Stripped of any necessary relationship to 'empirical' experience such as 'morphology' or appearance, art becomes the process of questioning its

¹⁴³ Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', p. 119.

¹⁴⁴ Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', p. 119.

¹⁴⁵ Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', p. 121.

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', *Studio International*, October 1969, 134–37 (p. 134).

¹⁴⁷ Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', p. 135.

own definition as art; 'a kind of proposition presented within the context of art as a comment on art.'¹⁴⁸

Kosuth's use of concepts borrowed from analytic philosophy, particularly Ayer's distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, served to give intellectual grounding to the artist's license to nominate art on their own terms. So, a 'work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that that particular work of art is art, which means, is a *definition* of art.' 'Art's viability', Kosuth insisted, 'is not connected to the presentation of visual (or other) kinds of experience'¹⁴⁹

Kosuth's use of the language of philosophy tends to veil what is also a pragmatic, institutional confrontation. That art should be what the artist says it is was not a new argument, but formulating the idea that art was conceptual because it took the form of proposition of what was possible, rather than what was conventionally accepted as art, gave this a ring of theoretical authority.

This nevertheless produced contradictions. Kosuth could criticise the institutionalised conventionalism of a formalist criticism which 'accepts as a definition of art one that exists solely on morphological grounds', and which therefore 'leads necessarily with a bias toward the morphology of traditional art'. Yet Kosuth's own arguments about the proposition-based nomination of art – "If someone calls it art," as Don Judd has said, "it's art" – itself depended on an institutional frame of reference, since the material manifestations of an artists proposition could have multiple identities.¹⁵⁰ Discussing the impossibility of distinguishing a box made by Donald Judd from other boxes, Kosuth asserts that 'the use of the box or cube form illustrates very well our earlier claim that an object is only art when placed in the context of art'.¹⁵¹ What Kosuth meant by the 'context of art' was not spelt out. But if 'morphological' conventions were redundant, this could only leave institutional or contextual conventions.

This inverted form of conventionalism – from art defined purely as a set of like objects and visual qualities, sanctioned by an institution, to art defined purely as a

¹⁴⁸ Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', p. 136.

¹⁴⁹ Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', p. 137.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Rauschenberg's telegram work of 1961, which read 'This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so', is mentioned in the second part of the article; Joseph Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy Part II "Conceptual Art" and Recent Art', *Studio*, 1969, 160–61 (p. 161).

¹⁵¹ Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', p. 137.

set of conceptual entities also, by implication, sanctioned by an institution – was, as it turned out, equally indifferent to matters of subjective experience. Discussing Jackson Pollock’s once-innovative drip paintings, Kosuth could conclude that ‘what is even less important to art is Pollock’s notions of “self-expression” because those kinds of subjective meanings are useless to anyone other than those involved with him personally.’¹⁵² The notion that ‘self-expression’ and aesthetic reception could in some way be mediated by the ‘morphology’ of the artwork is absent in Kosuth’s reckoning. The philosophically-clothed argument for art as tautological proposition turns out to have an institutional consequence – the ruling-out of any process of intersubjective disagreement or consensus over the relationship between empirical objects and their subjective reception.

This ultra-objective and anti-subjective approach may appear to contrast with Burgin’s use of theories of consciousness and perception. But Burgin’s apparent turn to subjective experience nevertheless betrayed a similar objectifying attitude. If Kosuth used the forms of analytic philosophy, it was to insulate the linguistic proposition of art-as-art from any test of individual or collective experience, elevating it above subjective particularity into a realm of non-empirical self-evidence. Burgin’s interpretation of the ‘conceptual’ in more neurological and psychological terms, and his insinuation of aesthetic experience as no more than a culturally-sanctioned behavioural response, leads him to a form of radical relativism that prioritised process and flux over institutional hierarchies and their fixed objects. Burgin discusses various relativistic interpretations of conscious experience, in which consciousness, perception and its objects were unstable. ‘In this state of awareness’, Burgin concludes, ‘the distinction between interior and exterior times, between subject and object, is eroded.’¹⁵³

Burgin’s and Kosuth’s texts recognised that the formula of attention to art objects licenced by formalist criticism had resulted in an almost exclusive attention to certain kinds of object whose designation as art seemed to be authorised only by an increasingly arbitrary relationship to a historical genealogy of similar forms. Ironically, the Greenbergian emphasis on what constituted an art object, in terms of the object-specificity of its medium and the expunging of any elements extraneous to that medium, could only open the door to further speculative investigation of the definitional limits of a type of activity such as ‘sculpture’, as became evident in the

¹⁵² Kosuth, ‘Art after Philosophy’, p. 136.

¹⁵³ Burgin, ‘Situational Aesthetics’, p. 121.

developments in sculpture taking place among artists associated with St Martins College. It turned out to be hard to find definitional limits on the basis of types of form, since these could only be proscriptive, and artists, after all, had no stake in the act of proscription.

The sense that forms alone, whatever their type, could not account for the 'art condition', led back to the problem of nomination; Kosuth, drawing on analytical philosophy's attention to concept and language, would frame the artist's intention as the starting point of a potentially limitless process of nomination.

Kosuth was not original in this approach. May of 1968 had seen the publication of Richard Wollheim's *Art and its Objects*. Wollheim, then professor of mind and logic at University College London, had popularised the term 'minimal art' in his article of the same name in the *American Arts Magazine*.¹⁵⁴ In *Art and its Objects* Wollheim sets out to offer an answer to the question 'what is art?' Wollheim's ponderously logical route through the question sets out to question the assumption that art can necessarily be identified as a certain type of material object. Although less conclusive than its methodical and logical style suggests, Wollheim's essay nevertheless attempts to synthesise a workable concept of art from a review of a diverse history of theoretical traditions, among these analytical philosophy, Freud's theories of the unconscious, and the art-historical tradition of the Vienna school of art history through the work of E.H. Gombrich. Wollheim's position seems, at first, relatively conservative, arriving at the conclusion that artworks do have a formal identity, dependent on the range of formal options offered to the artist by a historical tradition. This matrix of formal possibilities provides the space in and through which artists can produce new works; 'identifiable works of art constitute a historical not an idea, set,' Wollheim states.¹⁵⁵ It is this notion of tradition that Wollheim uses to dismiss any idea of 'expression' as unmediated. What is notable about Wollheim's book is that while he admits some basis for expression in terms of psychological and unconscious intentionality, he is more concerned with the institutional and social conventions by which art can be identified, and which requires a notion of the 'institution' of art. Wollheim refutes the idea that 'there is

¹⁵⁴ Richard Wollheim, 'Minimal Art', *Arts Magazine*, January 1965, 26–32.

¹⁵⁵ Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 161.

something which we call the artistic impulse or intention, and which can be identified quite independently of and prior to the institutions of art.¹⁵⁶

For Wollheim, art's objects are designated by a combination of historical convention and consensus; since art's objects cannot be assigned to an ideal 'set', their status is historically contingent. To hold the set together so that artworks can be identified with certain kinds of object without the sum of those objects becoming the limit of what can be identified with art, Wollheim has to open up the idea of the 'concept' of art:

... it is intrinsic to our attitude to works of art that we should regard them as works of art, or to use another terminology, that we should bring them under the concept 'art'.¹⁵⁷

Wollheim's book in many ways elaborates the problems at stake in the unravelling of critical authority and the rise of the preoccupation with nomination, particularly as it appears in *Studio* in both the developments of a post-formalist sculpture and in conceptualism. Wollheim's is eventually a conciliatory position, placing the act of nomination somewhere in the social relation of individual subjects, regulated by historical precedents, in which the meaning of an artwork cannot be reduced either to the pure intention of the artist, or to the single reception of the viewer. Consequently, it cannot be exhausted by interpretation.¹⁵⁸

But for the possibility of interpretation to stay open, the division between artists and viewer has to stay mutually reversible, so Wollheim argues that the position of artist and of spectator are transferable: 'it seems a necessary fact that, though not all spectators are also artists, all artists are spectators.'¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, if what is 'accredited' as art is not to be judged arbitrary then a 'context' of 'general principles', already agreed, gives broad legitimacy to certain formal choices and possibilities.

If *Art and its Objects* presented an idealised notion of the exchange between artist and spectator, and a necessary discontinuity between intention and reception, it suggests a consensual and social form of deliberation, in which neither the artist or spectator takes precedence. But what disturbs Wollheim's account is the possibility

¹⁵⁶ Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, p. 121.

¹⁵⁷ Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, p. 107.

¹⁵⁸ Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, p. 135.

¹⁵⁹ Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, p. 124.

that historical precedent or tradition cannot conclusively determine whether the 'accrediting' of art as art is not finally an arbitrary act – that art is a 'concept' lacking any stable object. Lurking, unacknowledged, is the problem of the indeterminacy of interpretation and the risk of a decisive separation of power between artist and viewer, or between intention and interpretation.

This is, I would argue, what is at stake in the tension between the critic and the artist as it unravelled in *Studio* in the last years of the 1960s. The rebellion against the critic's regulation of art's objects resulted in an increased attention to what might alternatively constitute the art object; but that opening-up itself meant that the act of nomination itself became a subject of inquiry. For an artist such as Burgin, the dissolution of the categories of art objects pointed, obliquely, to different ways of interpreting subjectivity; for the conceptualist Kosuth, the intersubjective ambiguity of the experience of objects could only be resolved by the unambiguous proposals of linguistic statements, which would obviate the need for interpretation. Nor would it any longer require interpreters. As Seth Siegelaub would put it when discussing the development of the 'new art' with Charles Harrison in *Studio* at the end of 1969, 'the need for an intermediary begins to become lessened. The new work is more accessible as art to the community: it needs fewer interpretive explanations.' Siegelaub goes on:

I don't know anything about history, but the art we're talking about seems to be more self-explanatory than any other. It just goes from mind to mind as directly as possible. Then need for a community of critics to explain it seems obviously superfluous right now.¹⁶⁰

Mediation of art objects, between and among subjects had become redundant, to be replaced by the un-mediated, or immediate, artwork. But if the first target in the reappropriation of critical self-legislation had been the critic and the practice of criticism, this move would have other consequences: the first would be the diminution of the contribution of the public in the exchange with the work; the other, associated, consequence would be the withdrawal of the artist from critical mediation in the creation of their own work. If for some artists the production of a work was to be determined by self-sufficient systems and rules, for others – artists who had been involved in the intensely communal form of self-criticism of the art

¹⁶⁰ 'On Exhibitions and the World at Large: Seth Siegelaub in Conversation with Charles Harrison', *Studio International*, December 1969, 202-3 (p. 203).

school – the rejection of critical conventions would lead to abstention from the subjective process of decision-making about the object: Barry Flanagan, writing about his work in *Studio* in 1967, articulates the tension between an active and passive ‘agent’, and the possibility of letting a work make itself. Keeping the self-critical subject – one perhaps too embedded in the, cultured, historical, institutionalised conventions of self-criticism – out of the process of making a work, was another aspect of the of the crisis of mediation:

within the area of sculpture there are carried its own solutions,
we invest it with problems, ideas and excitements. one merely causes
things
to reveal themselves to the sculptural awareness. It is the
awareness that develops not the agents of the sculptural phenomena

the same two space rope sculpture in its bag takes another form;
as much a sculpture but changed, possibly better than anything i could
have made or ‘invented’. the sculpture seems to have a life its own,
precocious, like the child we realise has a way its own – precocious.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Barry Flanagan, ‘British Artists at the Biennale Des Jeunes in Paris, September 28-
November 3’, *Studio International*, September 1967, p.85–99.

Chapter 2

Art criticism and the alternative press 1971-73

You may think it a luxury to spend so many column inches on painting and sculpture in an issue devoted to Repression. But being fucked in your head is just as repressive as being hit over it by a British soldier in the Bogside. And fucking you in the head, eyes, heart and mind is what the powerful machine called the 'art world' does. The injuries may be less visible than blood, but they hurt and leave lasting wounds.¹⁶²

By the early 1970s, new developments in art had begun to be acknowledged both in the mainstream press and in the specialist art press. As new exhibition venues, both commercial and public, began to represent and advocate developments in conceptualism, film and performance art, criticism in print was not slow to reflect this. As I explore further in Ch.3 the approach taken by the young broadsheet critics meant that these developments were given a prominent platform, through a period bracketed by the ICA's staging of *When Attitudes Become Form* in 1969 and the Hayward Gallery's exhibition *The New Art* in the summer of 1972. In parallel to this coverage, *Studio International* in particular acted as key platform for the dissemination of more extended debate around these developments, especially through the presentation of artists' own critical writings.

The representation of new tendencies in artistic practice also produced the need to subject them to critical debate, both for and against. As discussed in Ch. 1, in the case of early conceptualist activities and the rhetoric that turned on the 'dematerialisation' of the art object, this provoked responses that sought to defend not simply object-based practices (since in large part much of the new art still comprised objects whose visual aspects were not incidental) but to retain an emphasis on the value of the subject's varying evaluation of the work.¹⁶³ Yet those debates were largely ones conducted between participants contesting the terms of

¹⁶² Mike [Michael] Kustow, 'Art', *INK* (London, 1 September 1971), p. 9.

¹⁶³ See for example ch.1, Andrew Forge, 'Forces against Object-Based Art', *Studio International*, January 1971, 32-37.

objects and practices that were made visible by their access to the institutional apparatus of art – its teaching institutions, its commercial and public galleries and the platforms for critical appraisal in the specialist and mainstream press. To contest the institutional framework of the artwork as it stood required the establishment of alternative platforms in the shape of galleries and journals. Yet such contestation was a demand for visibility within the ambit of the institutional apparatus of art, and not necessarily an outright rejection of it.

There is, however, always some form of ‘outside’ to the ambit of a particular grouping of institutional actors. As noted in Ch.1, these relationships between the cadres of education, gallery institutions and the art press could be closely-knit – as evident in the network of contacts that existed, for example, between *Studio*, St Martins College, and the Courtauld Institute of Art. The relationship of art criticism to new artistic developments is, in such cases, dependent on the openness of the more established venues to providing visibility for these other activities. An important example of this would be Charles Harrison’s pivotal role in advocating for the work of conceptualist artists in *Studio*. As assistant editor at the high-profile *Studio*, Harrison had been well placed to develop relationships with artists such as Joseph Kosuth and Art & Language, and was, for example, instrumental in having Kosuth’s controversial essay *Art after Philosophy* published in *Studio*. (Harrison would by 1971 abandon *Studio* to join Art & Language as the editor of the group’s journal *Art-Language*.) In this sense, the ‘outside’ was quickly assimilated into a debate hosted by these more established platforms, even if those outside practices had a substantial influence on the context they came to participate in.

There were nevertheless positions and activities that lay outside of these influential institutional connections. This chapter discusses how contemporary art in the first years of the 1970s came to appear in publications that existed beyond not only the specialist art press, but also the coverage of art in the mainstream press, specifically in the pages of a second wave of the underground and radical press, during 1971 and 1972. The account of Peter Fuller’s early criticism in Ch. 4 touches on his involvement on the staff collective of the weekly left-wing newspaper *7 Days*. This chapter examines the coverage of contemporary art across three titles: the underground newspaper *INK*, a newspaper-styled offshoot of the underground magazine *Oz*, and which launched on 1 May 1971, folding in February 1972; *7 Days*, which launched on 27 October 1971, and ceased publication in March

the following year; and *Spare Rib*, the magazine that emerged out of the women's liberation movement. *Spare Rib* launched in June 1972, running until 1992.

INK and *7 Days* appeared as a consequence of the problems that had beset older titles of the radical and underground press. *Spare Rib*, launched slightly later, was itself planned by its editors as a consequence of the conflicts between the developing perspectives of the women's liberation movement and the older underground press. Reading these in comparison for their attention to visual art offers a useful case history of the relationship between artistic production, art criticism and the deployment of theory in the evaluation of art. Read together, the history of the titles also embodies a critical shift which would have long-lasting effects on art criticism, that of the turn towards a substantially conceived politics of identity, driven in this instance by the development of feminist art theory strongly grounded in the increasingly influential theoretical fields of psychoanalysis and semiotics.

Reading across these three titles also offers a perspective on how different editorial platforms attempted to report artistic activity while relating these to the demands of more general political commitments, and how these commitments issued – or failed to issue – from a developed theorisation of those commitments. Without a unified critical perspective, *INK* tended to report rather than criticise. In the case of *7 Days* and *Spare Rib*, readings of semiotics and psychoanalysis were drawn on to inform general questions of art's political function: with *Spare Rib*, psychoanalysis was brought to bear on particular instances of contemporary work, something from which *7 Days* largely refrained. With *Spare Rib* in particular, psychoanalysis's contribution to feminist theory opened the door to a more systematic criticism of misogyny in contemporary art, while framing the debate regarding the representation and absence of women in art historical discourse.

INK

From its first issue, *INK* made an attempt to cover visual art, although this coverage dwindled towards the end of the paper's ten-month run. Its most regular contributor, Eddie Wolfram, filed short exhibition reviews and a number of comment pieces, while other contributions appeared by Fuller, as well as by Barry

Martin (whose magazine *ONE* is discussed in Ch. 4) and the artist Michael Craig-Martin.

Wolfram's short, listing-style exhibition reviews indicate something of the problem of visual art coverage in a putatively 'underground' publication; Wolfram's selections are drawn, perhaps surprisingly for a publication apparently rooted in the counterculture, from the established commercial art world. Nevertheless, Wolfram's and the other writers' perspective was underpinned by the general disquiet over the status of art objects. *INK*'s second issue carries Wolfram's ambiguous and thoughtful consideration of sculptures by Barry Flanagan. While Flanagan's sculpture still retained 'all its familiar physical heredity, its material characteristics, the after-image of its past organic and existential history,' it was nevertheless:

...the sculpture of the transitory, of impermanence rather than monumental time-binding, as are the works of all yesterday's sculptors, Moore or Rodin, fossilized in bronze for the use of eternity. Flanagan's work is sculpture taken to the nearest point to pure concept; minimally, just one more nudge and all would be vaporized, a new Zen word, unable to confront, only to pose as idea.¹⁶⁴

Wolfram's nervous enthusiasm for Flanagan's sculpture suggests a preoccupation with the problems of definition and categorisation that beset the traditions of object-based art. While Flanagan was 'one of the first sculptors to be troubled by the role of the sculptured object as the tangible symbol of bourgeois wealth', he could also be held up as an artist able to sidestep the problem of art's 'chronic over-verbalisation'.¹⁶⁵ Wolfram's commentary attempted to balance the problem of critical frameworks against an authenticity of experience, while making the association between conceptual 'dematerialisation' and verbalised inauthenticity:

In the light of all that's been happening recently, or, more accurately, what has been only in the mind to do, I have to conclude that there may well be a final straw for the proverbial artistic camel's back. You can conceptualise to your heart's content but if there is no intrinsically direct, physical

¹⁶⁴ Eddie Wolfram, 'Flanagan in the Greenwood', *INK*, 8 May 1971, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ Wolfram, 'Flanagan in the Greenwood'.

confrontation, then whatever may be going on in the Hades of psychic transmission it is unlikely to add up to a visual art experience.¹⁶⁶

The attention to the role of immediacy and to changing definitions of art would resurface a few weeks later, in a two-headed commentary on the Robert Morris exhibition staged at the Tate Gallery, part of which included an installation of objects and structures that invited physical participation by the visitor. Supporting the show was Craig-Martin, with an opposing view by Fuller. For Craig-Martin, 'important questions raised by the whole concept of the exhibition have now been asked in the country's major institution of contemporary art. What is the role of the artist, of his work, of the audience, or the museum? The implications of these questions are ultimately political and it will be interesting to watch reaction surface.'¹⁶⁷

Craig-Martin's articulate and laconic commentary made a persuasive case for Morris's definition-shifting activity, and what connects it to Wolfram's thoughts on Flanagan is the attention to the idea of the unmediated as a source of authority:

'The problem for the artist is to establish a basis for working which doesn't dominate what he does but which acts as a stable reference. For Morris that base is the body. They body in relation to objects, to activities, to perception, to ideas, to itself.'¹⁶⁸

This sober, seemingly objective justification for Morris's work is in strong contrast to the contemptuous rhetoric of the second comment, penned by Fuller, in which the intemperate critic mocked that 'Morris is an inflated guru for the art school avant garde, who believes that you have done quite enough if you teach people that their feet are between five and six foot away from the top of their head.'¹⁶⁹

Fuller appeared only once again in *INK*, with a scathing article on the work of the Bulgarian artist Christo. There, Fuller attacked the way in which Christo's grand environmental installations had become a form of art spectacle. For Fuller, there was 'a time when the visual arts, in their attempt to break out of a specifically object-art tradition, were moving into a new and excitingly revolutionary area,

¹⁶⁶ Wolfram, 'Flanagan in the Greenwood'.

¹⁶⁷ Michael Craig-Martin, 'Morris Dances', *INK*, 29 May 1971, p. 9.

¹⁶⁸ Craig-Martin.

¹⁶⁹ Peter Fuller, 'Morris Dances', *INK*, 29 May 1971, p. 9.

which denied the intimate links between art and capitalist marketing systems which had existed hitherto.' But in 'liberating art from objecthood, we have also liberated the imaginations of artists and allowed them to soar to unprecedented levels of personal, aesthetic indulgence'.¹⁷⁰

Fuller was subsequently attacked for the piece in letters published in the following issue, among them his onetime fellow contributor to *Black Dwarf* Janet Daley, then also contributing to *Arts Review* and *Art & Artists*. Daley's criticism pulled up both Fuller and Wolfram for what she saw as their reactionary criticism of anti-object art. 'The whole point of my critical assaults... has been to counter the *intolerance* of current art (or anti-art) fads and I do not like to see others making use of remarkably similar critical points and vocabulary for extremely intolerant ends', Daley wrote.¹⁷¹

Fuller's tirades and the response to them illustrates how new developments in art were tied, politically and culturally, to the broader anti-authoritarian attitudes which underwrote the counterculture. In this regard, the idea of the immediacy of human experience outside of both language and institution drew political significance as the counterpoint to the managerial authority of discourse. So, in his review of the Scottish section of that summer's national *Art Spectrum* exhibition, Richard Demarco (the influential Edinburgh-based gallerist who had fostered close ties with avant-garde artists in Europe) bemoaned the almost complete lack of influence of 'recent avant-garde developments' on Scottish artists. As a mild rebuke to their insular and painterly traditionalism, Demarco invoked Aberdeen's 'dramatic skyline of phallic spires and towers against a louring sky', its 'harbour of trawlers and shrieking gulls', which Demarco chooses to reinterpret as an 'exciting environment, a visual art statement involving light, sound and kinetic movement which delighted and disturbed, the way every exhibition should'.¹⁷² Demarco's shift from the art gallery to the non-art environment is a clever rhetorical move, simultaneously highlighting the institutional frameworks containing art, while making a link between the self-legitimising authenticity of the real world, artistic practices that were in some way analogies of this reality, and a notion of subjective experience which responds authentically to both without distinction.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Fuller, 'Global Conman', *INK*, 17 July 1971, p. 19.

¹⁷¹ Janet Daley, 'Letters', *INK*, 24 July 1971, p. 2.

¹⁷² Richard Demarco, 'Mc Spectrum', *INK*, 24 July 1971, p. 19.

This conflict between mediated and unmediated experience was a notable refrain in *INK*, a publication which took the radical and subversive potential of individual experience and a wider societal shift in consciousness as a given. To Wolfram's more awkwardly conventional gallery reviews the critic later contributed a regular column, 'Art Scene Around'. In response to the Tate exhibition of Alistair McAlpine's donation of his collection of British 'New Generation' sculpture, Wolfram came to an interesting conclusion. While celebrating the achievements of the New Generation sculptors, Wolfram would bring the whole direction of a secular, rationalised formalism into question;

Is the idea of men making icons about their faith and hopes, proscribing artefacts with magical power, or leaving monuments behind them telling of their ideals and efforts, necessarily less preferable than a scientific teach-in about perceptive space? Is any proper art work more essentially about form-articulation than content in terms of any human message it may carry?¹⁷³

It is a remarkable statement of uncertainty about what should underpin the significance of visual art, bringing back in ideas of content, ritual and social practice which formalism excluded. The artist 'making intellectual demands of an ever-increasing conceptualization... might be advised to consider the needs of the spectator some more if he is to stay in business as a gifted and beneficial donor to the quality of living', Wolfram suggests. In his conclusion, Wolfram sensed the desire for some sense of embodied subjectivity, and art's particularly self-conscious claim to the value of subjective experience:

At least the pathetic campy of the human sculptors Gilbert and George, currently showing some exhaustingly trite realist paintings at the Whitechapel Gallery, demonstrates their awareness of this need. These symptoms have been obvious for some time now; the nostalgic substitutions for real experiences were all there in Pop Art and its subsequent appeal is evidence of the real needs of the audience who desperately want the kind of experience that only art proper can give. In art, discourse – no matter how learned – is no substitute for the archetypal

¹⁷³ Eddie Wolfram, 'Seen Around', *INK*, 31 July 1971, p. 15.

ingredients of imagination and expression, and one is no use without the other.¹⁷⁴

The sense of cultural malaise issuing from an overly 'conceptualised' activity is evident, and throughout *INK*'s run the relationship between officialdom and an overly professionalised caste of artists and art discourses becomes a persistent theme. With the result of the *Oz* obscenity trial in early August,¹⁷⁵ *INK* stalled publication, the editors having declared postponement of publication while they assessed the consequences of the *Oz* verdict – *INK*'s publishing company, Oz Publications and Ink Ltd, was also a defendant in the trial.¹⁷⁶

When *INK* returned with its issue of 18 August, its editorial tenor had shifted drastically, the issue the first of two special issues committed to the theme of 'repression'. Under various subheadings – repression: law, repression: cops, repression: life, among them – the repression issues attacked the complex of political forces that had begun to turn on the counterculture and the underground press. *INK*'s editors argued that while capitalist society appeared to grant freedoms for 'the chic intellectual who can vent his personal rage in public' and the celebrity 'who can afford non-conformity in lavish privacy', it actively suppressed 'such freedoms when claimed by the majority'.¹⁷⁷

The issue of 1 September ran a page under the heading 'Repression: Art'. Headed by an introduction by Michael Kustow, the ex-director of the ICA who had been contributing mainstream and fringe theatre reviews as one of *INK*'s theatre critics. The 'Repression: art' page was a loosely organised range of responses to the Arts Council's multi-regional *Art Spectrum* exhibition running over the summer. For Kustow:

¹⁷⁴ Wolfram, 'Seen Around'.

¹⁷⁵ The *Oz* obscenity trial began on 23 June 1971. The underground magazine *Oz*, edited by Richard Neville, Felix Dennis and Jim Anderson, had appeared in 1967, and alongside *International Times*, was a mouthpiece for the counterculture of the late 1960s. Its May 1971 issue, (the 'schoolkids issue') became the subject of a crown prosecution, the editors accused of various counts of publishing obscene articles and 'conspiring to corrupt public morals'. Neville, Dennis and Anderson were found guilty of the obscenity charges on July 28 1971. See Nigel Fountain, *Underground: The London Alternative Press 1966-74* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 140-58.

¹⁷⁶ See 'Sentences Postponed after Jury, by Majority, Finds "Oz" Editors Guilty on Four Obscenity Counts', *Times*, 29 July 1971, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ 'Editorial', *INK*, 18 August 1971, p. 2.

The 'art world' is run by a Holy Trinity: the Dealer, the Curator and the Critic. Between them, they have wrapped up the artist and his work, sealing him off from the kind of engagement with daily life that writers, musicians and film-makers can still achieve, albeit with a great struggle against those who manipulate them.¹⁷⁸

Apart from some excerpts from confused and error-strewn mainstream press coverage, the page carried two impassioned comments by artists Ian Breakwell and Liliane Lijn. Lijn's contribution had a visionary, mystical inflection; 'The breed known as 'Artist' is slowly becoming extinct... Artists are not repressed. At most they are stifled. But the majority are born tame or soon become so.' For Lijn, 'Art is no longer a magic formula, an exorcism, a human attempt to go beyond the known. Art has become a product.'¹⁷⁹

Alongside Lijn's dystopian exhortations, Breakwell would make a more grounded point about the power of a free art, as a reflection on the prosecution case against *Oz*:

A feature of the *OZ* trial was the implication by defence witnesses that visual and verbal images do not have the power to alter people's awareness or opinions. If this is true (other than as a legal ploy) then those of us who spend much of our time making such images might just as well pack in here and now. But, like Mary Whitehouse, I *do* believe that images have the power to change people... Unlike Mrs. Whitehouse however, I rejoice in that power, whereas most artists seem as scared of it as she is.¹⁸⁰

Breakwell's observation that artists ended up talking a 'meaningless pseudo-language littered with words like "concept", "interesting", "situation", "open-ended", "inter-action", "structure" etc.' led him quickly to the conclusion that 'We create our own repression,' with a closing flourish that 'One good fuck is worth a thousand concepts.'¹⁸¹

Breakwell's indictment of the professionalised artistic community, and Kustow's preference for writers, musicians and filmmakers over artists, may have had some effect on *INK*'s wavering interest in visual art. After the 'Repression: art' issue, the

¹⁷⁸ Kustow.

¹⁷⁹ Liliane Lijn, 'Art', *INK* (London, 1 September 1971), p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ Ian Breakwell, 'Art', *INK* (London, 1 September 1971), p. 9.

¹⁸¹ Breakwell.

coverage of visual art diminished swiftly; the following issue counterposed the previous 'repression' tag with articles head 'alternatives', but an 'alternatives: art' was absent, and in the subsequent reviews columns, 'art' had vanished as a genre. The Kasmin Gallery's adverts for its shows, the only art gallery to advertise in *INK*, disappeared. The last substantial text on art was artist-written: Stuart Brisley's art column in the 5 October issue extended Breakwell's criticism of the art world's self-limiting horizons. For Brisley, there was now:

... and absolute schism between those who would naturally follow established patterns of artistic behaviour and those who find it necessary to formulate relationships through their work reflecting an awareness of, and adherence to, actual and impending social political change...¹⁸²

Brisley's text describes an opposition between a sensibility of openness to an experience of reality and one that operated on the basis of socially conservative orders and systems. 'Our existence in the present is unique, irrevocable', wrote Brisley:

'It causes us to erect structures between ourselves and the reality of it, but as the same time it is constantly infiltrating, continually impinging on our sense of stability.'¹⁸³

Such an openness to existence necessitated a rejection of the process of erecting defences against that which threatened our 'sense of stability'. At the core of Brisley's rhetoric is a celebration of the subjective over objectified formal conventions, in which 'a distinction might be made between fundamental artistic sensibility and the forms which these may take.' 'An artistic visual activity', Brisley asserted;

... is a human sensibility which does not cease to exist if a particular form, such as painting ceases to be effective as a communicative device. It is obvious that the sensibility would evolve through other venues, as in fact now happens.¹⁸⁴

With Brisley's comments *INK* turned its back on visual art. Its initial focus on the conventional forms and established institutional contexts seems peculiar in a

¹⁸² Stuart Brisley, 'Art', *INK*, 5 October 1971, p. 16.

¹⁸³ Brisley.

¹⁸⁴ Brisley.

magazine that was otherwise fighting for individual and social liberation, from the rejection of sexual conformism to the war in Northern Ireland, to a vocal criticism of the shortcomings of the counterculture for which it stood – notably in its often fraught debate on the habits and attitudes of the culture that had developed around rock music. But *INK*'s view of the counterculture was tied to its nascent economy, and the tensions that existed between the desire for cultural freedom and the necessities and demands of commerce, of the practicalities of producing and exchanging: One of *INK*'s ongoing preoccupations was the perceived corruption and venality of the music industry, alongside the cultural and political outlooks of pop music's leading lights – notably in *INK*'s criticism of John Lennon, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

The criticisms of the art world's institutional conditions should be seen in this context. Brisley's comments are, pointedly, not simply a question of the expansion and redefinition of art's formal limits and genre categories, when he concludes that:

It may be that the motivational differences shown between those who use potentially commercially viable art forms, and those whose work is not marketable in terms of 'exclusive' property is more basic, more fundamental than [sic] merely the need to find expression in this way rather than that.¹⁸⁵

Brisley's argument is that what conditions the forms of art is not simply a matter of cultural tradition or convention, but more fundamentally an effect of property relations. The more universal notion of art as a 'human sensibility', which would 'evolve through other venues' has interesting implications, since it allows for the possibility that other institutional and economic conditions might supplant the art world that already existed. Reading Brisley's comments back over *INK*'s earlier coverage of fringe culture, and via Kustow's preference for live arts over the static objects of visual art, a passing sign of this shift to 'other venues' might be found in the article that shares a page with Wolfram's discussion of Barry Flanagan: a review of the radical theatre director Jane Arden's feminist Holocaust Theatre group and its production of Arden's *A New Communion for Freaks, Prophets and Witches* (1971), the review documenting the appearance in the play of artist Penny Slinger. Slinger would soon begin to appear in gallery reviews of her shows at Angela Flowers Gallery and The Garage, and as we shall see below, would be taken

¹⁸⁵ Brisley.

up by feminist art critics. But Slinger's active involvement in visual art would dwindle by the end of the decade, as she found another career as a writer. Performing in a theatre group on one hand, the Chelsea College-trained Slinger would appear as an individual artist in the context of the commercial art gallery. While the formation of new approaches to visual art were possible, these nevertheless required institutional and economic support, yet how this would be reconciled with visual art's peculiar commercial status and its particular relationship to question of private pleasure and possession would remain uncertain. How an economic infrastructure of cultural production and its ideological and cultural assumptions were connected underlies Brisley's comments, and, as we shall see, would appear more extensively in the deliberation of the politics of cinema made by film critics in *7 Days*. Brisley's reflection on the a 'universal' artistic sensibility, in close echo of Demarco's celebration of experiential value untied to particular formal traditions and the limits of form, implicitly put the emphasis on the physical and institutional *venue* of art, and the politics and economics of its viability.

The preoccupation with the institutional and commercial limits of cultural forms signalled in many of the contributions to *INK* never evolved into anything approaching a critical perspective on visual art. The disappearance of visual art coverage in *INK* follows the editorial changes precipitated by the *Oz* trial. With the short hiatus of August, a new editorial staff was drafted in, one which, as Nigel Fountain recounts in his memoir of the underground press, began to take a more seriously political approach to current events, and a distancing from the aging attitudes of the earlier underground:

... the 'Alternatives' issues had shown ... a new route for *Ink*. The subsequent issues developed on similar lines. Next came 'Futures', then a 'Working-class' issue; an Irish issue; by mid November it had got to 'Who owns Britain?'¹⁸⁶

INK's editorial shift, as Fountain points out, occurred around the same time as *7 Days* was launched. Both publications would compete for a similar territory and readership. But whereas *INK* evolved from an increasingly self-critical and riven counterculture, faced with the assimilation of the counterculture by corporate culture and the new conservative backlash against the 'permissive society'

¹⁸⁶ Fountain, p. 152.

signalled by the *Oz* trial, *7 Days* followed on from the experience of the New Left newspapers spurred into existence by the student radicalism of 1968, first with *Black Dwarf* and then *Red Mole*.

7 Days

7 Days was a better-organised and funded successor to *Black Dwarf* and the paper that resulted from the split in its editorial, *Red Mole*. Coming out of the New Left, those two titles addressed a readership outside of the traditional Labour working class, building on the student militancy following the summer of 1968. The New Left's emphasis on spontaneous forms of political action and organisation, and its attention to culture as a site of contestation, inspired those editorials to attempt some coverage and discussion of cultural and artistic life. Among the backers of *7 Days* were the veteran left-wing art critic John Berger, and the former controller of BBC television programmes Stuart Hood. (Hood would join the staff of the Royal College of Art as professor in the School of Film and Television in late 1972.¹⁸⁷)

As noted in the context of Peter Fuller's early writing in Ch.3, visual art was only tentatively covered in *Black Dwarf* and *Red Mole*. Other than Fuller's single article on the art market in *Red Mole*, the only other attention to visual art or architecture were contributions by Janet Daley, a young American art historian who would establish herself alongside Fuller as an aggressive critic of conceptualism and avant-garde art, writing for *Arts Review* and *Art & Artists*. (Daley would much later become an outspoken conservative commentator.) The *Dwarf* and *Red Mole* did however cover film, principally in contributions by John Matthews, the editor of the small film journal *Cinemantics*, which focussed on French New Wave cinema.

Matthews's few contributions there signal an important shift to come. His review of *Easy Rider* is a critique of the film's compromised politics, yet concluding that 'because all discussion centres around the film's *content*, and we are forced to accept its reactionary *form*, we are, thus excluded from any meaningful dialogue'.¹⁸⁸ The politics of the audience's social relation to artistic form is also at stake for Matthews in *Red Mole* a couple of months later, in an article titled 'Films: lets do it in the street', in which Matthews broaches the idea of film as a language: 'this image

¹⁸⁷ See 'The Times Diary', *Times*, 18 July 1972, p. 12.

¹⁸⁸ John Matthews, 'Easy Rider: Bikes + Money + Dream = Freedom' (*Black Dwarf*, 7 March 1970), p. 11.

is really a mosaic of coded information, and our perception is a process of decoding this information.’¹⁸⁹ Matthews is interested in a form of cinema which provoked its audience to do something other than watch cinema:

The most basic question we can ask here is: what would an audience be doing if not watching a film? ... The function of a revolutionary cinema then is to drive people away from this screen, onto the streets, where perhaps their relationship to each other will improve. And this means infiltrating the media that reach most people – commercial cinema and television.¹⁹⁰

Matthews’s activist approach is influenced by the example of Jean-Luc Godard, in a piece which makes reference to a number of film groups – Newsreel, Cinema Action and the Tattooists, which Matthews would discuss once more in *Red Mole* in August 1970, in an article discussing their films and the work of David Larcher.¹⁹¹ But neither paper further pursued their earlier attention to matters of culture and art, as both turned their attention increasingly towards a more populist militant activism as the left responded to the reality of Ted Heath’s conservative government, elected in May 1970.

7 Days, however, did attempt to incorporate a more sustained perspective on the question of art and culture in its pages. More professionally produced than its antecedents, it was launched with an idea that it could capture a broader (and moderately more affluent) readership than the earlier militant weeklies. And in contrast to those, *7 Days* began to offer a platform to some new voices on art. But here the particular emphasis was on film and television. In January 1972, midway through the paper’s short existence, the BBC broadcast Berger’s four-part documentary *Ways of Seeing*, which Fuller dutifully reviewed for *7 Days*.¹⁹² Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* was clearly attentive to changing critical debates, beginning with its rehearsal of Walter Benjamin’s essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (which had only recently been published in English, in 1968), continuing with a feminist-inflected discussion of the female nude (a riposte, in part, to Kenneth Clark’s book *The Nude*), while ending with an emotive attack on the ideological ‘dreams’ produced by the advertising industry. *Ways of Seeing*’s emphasis on economics and how ideology was embodied in visual culture was

¹⁸⁹ John Matthews, ‘Film: Lets Do It in the Streets’ (*Red Mole*, 1 May 1970), p. 11.

¹⁹⁰ Matthews, ‘Film: Lets Do It in the Streets’.

¹⁹¹ See John Matthews, ‘The Cinema Liberation Front’ (*Red Mole*, August 1970), p. 11.

¹⁹² Peter Fuller, ‘Berger’s Anti-Clark Lecture’, *7 Days*, 12 January 1972.

certainly in alignment with the changing interest of left-wing and radical discussions of art and culture. Yet Berger's *Ways of Seeing* retained elements of the critic's older commitments to a more humanist Marxism, and the correlation between aesthetic and social truth. By contrast, *7 Days*'s cultural coverage suggested an emerging attitude to imagery and narrative suspicious of the older left-wing tradition of aesthetic realism. In this, the influence of semiotics and a reenergised psychoanalytical approach became increasingly evident.

So in *Art and Marxism*, Jeff Symons attacked the idea that Marxist aesthetics only reduced art and culture to the question of its economic determinant, but reserved most of his criticism for the Marxist tradition of realism, developed notably by György Lukács. (Lukács had died, aged 86, in June 1971.) Against this, Symons held up the example of the Russian formalists and of Brecht and Benjamin, emphasising how these artists and theorists had addressed the technical and economic conditions of artistic production. These, Symons suggested were increasingly relevant to a period now dominated by the new mass media. 'Artistic production is now effectively subordinated to a media-system which imposes precise limits on the significance of the products being consumed,' Symons writes. However:

... the artistic commodity still differs from other commodities [in] being a product which signifies and which requires to be read as the embodiment of ideas. The process of artistic production also retains its character as a practical activity whose purpose is the transmission of signification.

When we recognize the work as a product then we confront the special problems both of its conditions of production and consumption and we can begin to ask the question not only of how art can be produced, but how it can be consumed in a revolutionary way.¹⁹³

Symons's attention to production is double-edged; it is the idea of art as something produced by a set of technical and economic conditions, but it is also a thing itself constructed, an assemblage of significations. And the suggestion that art might be consumed as well as produced 'in a revolutionary way', though remaining unexplained, demanded answers about who would be doing the consuming, and to what end.

¹⁹³ Jeff Symons, 'Art and Marxism', *7 Days*, 8 December 1971, p. 17.

The Marxist critical tradition of realism had come under attack in an earlier issue of *7 Days*, in an article by the film theorist Peter Wollen. Wollen's book review of Linda Nochlin's book *Realism* (1971) argued that while painterly realism had been superseded by photography, modernist art's disconnection from class politics resulted in 'the constant collapse of modernism, however highly politicized, either into various kinds of functionalism and industrial design, or else back into self-expression'.¹⁹⁴ The retreat from the image, Wollen argued, was also the retreat from words:

The whole attempt of the non-verbal arts, both painting and music, to get away from words has always been an elite tendency. Popular art has always insisted on words.¹⁹⁵

Wollen's criticism reflects the changes taking place in film theory in the UK in which he was involved, and which brought together the reception of French semiotics and the revival of interest in the Soviet avant-garde, drawing particularly on the example and theoretical writings of Sergei Eisenstein. Wollen's investigation of the idea of film as potentially structured like a language, and his attention to the theory of folkloric narrative of the Soviet scholar Vladimir Propp, opened quickly onto psychoanalytical ideas of the unconscious. Explaining to readers of *7 Days* the lasting importance of the Surrealists, Wollen would conclude that, although their political activism was little more than romanticism:

... the great advance which the surrealists made, in comparison with Brecht for instance, was their insistence on the place of the unconscious. Both Brecht and Eisenstein adopted a form of behaviourist psychology and, compared with this, even a misunderstanding of Freud was a definite step forward.... The surrealists made it possible to envisage an art which, drawing on an understanding of madness, of dreams, of oppressed cultures, could turn and fight bourgeois aesthetics and ideologies of art. It is in this sense that a critical return to the surrealists is a precondition for any new upsurge of revolutionary art...¹⁹⁶

The connections between the mass-produced image, images and films as codes to be interpreted, and the latent narrative of the unconscious was an attractive mix.

¹⁹⁴ Peter Wollen, 'The Real, the Surreal and the Mundane', *7 Days*, 27 October 1972, p. 26.

¹⁹⁵ Wollen, 'The Real, the Surreal and the Mundane'.

¹⁹⁶ Peter Wollen, 'Surrealism', *7 Days*, 1 January 1972.

Another article by Matthews was not on film but on advertising, offering a critique of a recent advertising campaign, for White Horse whiskey, and its slogan 'You can take a White Horse anywhere':

The slogan's basic message is that White Horse is an acceptable whisky in the very best society – that disposes of the "unfortunate" working class connotations of the brand. But the tension between the words and the images accompanying them is elaborate, and this is what gives the ad its strength.¹⁹⁷

Matthews's discussion of the content of an advert, made by advertising creatives themselves increasingly conversant with the visual strategies of surrealism, was tied to an understanding of mass media culture as part of the way in which capitalism's power was transmitted and maintained. Similar to the positions found in *INK*, *7 Days*'s contributors were keenly aware that cultural forms depended on techniques of production and economies of production and distribution. But implicated in these systems was also an attention to the position of the audience, as active participant or passive spectator. This would be a theme returned to by the filmmaker and theorist Laura Mulvey (then married to Wollen), in article that, like Matthews's earlier pieces in *Black Dwarf* and *Red Mole*, discussed developments in collective filmmaking in New York and London. 'The Newsreel and radical film' was authored by Mulvey, Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury. Field and Sainsbury had set up the film journal *Afterimage* in 1970, while Sainsbury had been involved in setting up The Other Cinema, an alternative film venue and distribution initiative that had developed out of discussions within the London Film-Maker's Co-op in 1969.¹⁹⁸

Discussing the experience of the American political film collective Newsreel and the tension between making films and watching them as an audience, the writers emphasised how conventional forms of political film-making tended to find themselves confronted either with the insuperable dominance of 'established versions of reality' peddled by the established media, or conversely, if received by 'comrades already engaged in some kind of struggle' such films might 'easily

¹⁹⁷ John Matthews, 'How to Sell Whisky', *7 Days*, 2 February 1972, p. 20.

¹⁹⁸ See Julia Knight and Peter Campbell Thomas, *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image* (Intellect Books, 2011), p. 72.

become 'solidarity films, of immense importance as a means of communication within the movement but with little analytical dimension'.¹⁹⁹

By contrast, they argued:

For a film to have a fundamentally political significance it should challenge all the norms of media representation of reality, move beyond existing purely as a statement before discussion, break down the whole concept of spectacle and spectator.²⁰⁰

To break that older concept of spectacle and spectator meant that spectators should be participants in the making of a film. What this might end up revealing however, were the divisions that might exist among the participants, and 'Newsreel and radical film' is interesting particularly for its turn of attention to the women's movement, reporting on the difficulties of one Newsreel group, which had broken up 'partly under strain due to differences between men and women in the group, the women were accused of having middle-class preoccupations and were attacked for lack of concern about the working class movement.'²⁰¹

The issue of the representation of women had appeared in an earlier article by Mulvey, in her acerbic review of Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange*. For Mulvey, what was at stake in the film's bleak vision of the violent protagonist's battle against conformity was Kubrick's own misogyny and misanthropy:

The paradox of Kubrick's romantic agony lies in his closeness to the ethos of sexism that pervades the movie itself. Never in any of his movies have women been more than subservient supports or sex symbols, if indeed they appear at all... His problem is how to save the masculine conception of power, aggressively and creation from turning into pointless violence on the one hand and dehumanising authority on the other.²⁰²

It is worth contrasting here the countercultural *INK's* review of the same film. For *INK's* reviewer, the violence is seen as a last expression of vitality and freedom:

¹⁹⁹ Laura Mulvey, Peter Sainsbury and Simon Field, 'The Newsreel and Radical Film', *7 Days*, 18 March 1972, p. 18.

²⁰⁰ Mulvey, Sainsbury and Field.

²⁰¹ Mulvey, Sainsbury and Field.

²⁰² Laura Mulvey, 'Death Gets a Kiss from Kubrick', *7 Days* (London, 19 January 1972), p. 21.

'...however fucked up and brutal, what little spontaneity and 'enjoyment' is left lies with the young thugs, not with their would-be controllers and 'curers'.²⁰³

The influence of Screen

The appearance of a more overtly theoretical approach to visual images in *7 Days* came out of the growing influence of French structuralist theory in British film criticism from around 1968. Wollen had been involved in the Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT), an organisation set up in 1959, whose mission was to develop and understanding of film in schools and colleges. Its journal *Screen Education* had been re-launched as *Screen* in 1969, newly funded by the British Film Institute. With the spring issue of 1971, *Screen* announced a new editor and editorial board, which included Wollen; the new *Screen* committed itself to what it saw as a fundamental reappraisal of the theoretical grounds of film criticism, turning its sights on the inadequacies of the dominant *auteur* film criticism, and the perceived amateurism of the established British journal *Sight and Sound*. With its new direction, *Screen* formulated a justification for film that merged pedagogy with political activism. In a paper presented at a British Film Institute seminar in 1968, Wollen had previously drawn on the example of the Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein:

[Eisenstein] did not believe that the world of appearances would offer up its meaning to the ordinary spectator: it would only feed his prejudices, his ideology in the Althusserian sense of ideology as 'the very "lived experience" of human existence'. He believed that the spectator had to be emotionally provoked into participating in a new schematization of the world, demanded of him by his own will to understand the film.²⁰⁴

The new *Screen's* intellectual debt was to the French film journal *Cahiers du Cinema*. *Screen's* Spring 1971 issue carried a translation of a key essay from *Cahiers* by its editors Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, in which the authors positioned their critique as a rigorously materialist and scientific interrogation of the cinema's ideological and economic realities. While *Screen* attacked the subjectivism of *auteur* analysis, Comolli and Narboni's text emphasised a fundamental hostility to any

²⁰³ 'Clockwork Orange', *INK* (London, 7 January 1972), p. 21.

²⁰⁴ Peter Wollen, 'Cinema and Semiology: Some Points of Contact', in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (Verso, 1982), pp. 3-17 (p. 10).

realist idea of transparency. Reality was not something to be re-presented in ever-greater degrees of authenticity, and normal appearances were themselves deceptive:

When we set out to make a film, from the very first shot, we are encumbered by the necessity of reproducing things not as they really are but as they appear when refracted through the ideology.²⁰⁵

For the editors of *Cahiers*, a film's critical value was to be found in the way that it disrupted or denaturalised the experience of what would otherwise be the *false transparency* of a worldview shaped by ideology. Part of this practice of disruption would also be located in the technical and economic contexts of film, in an attention to the conditions that went into producing a film as a material object. Attention to both aspects was necessary to be politically effective:

We would stress that only action on both fronts, 'signified' and 'signifiers' has any hope of operating against the prevailing ideology.

Economic/political and formal action have to be indissolubly wedded.²⁰⁶

The other notable text to appear in *Screen's* Spring 1971 issue was Ben Brewster's book review of *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism & The Sciences of Man*, published the year before, which had published the proceedings of a colloquium held at the John Hopkins University in the US in 1966. That colloquium was important for bringing together American academics with what now reads as a roll-call of French post-structuralism; the colloquists including Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Jean Hyppolite and Tzvetan Todorov, against the Lukács-inspired Marxist Lucien Goldmann and the American Paul de Man. A contributor to *New Left Review* and *Screen*, and the translator of Althusser's *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, Brewster used the *Structuralist Controversy* as a starting point from which to consider Structuralism's relevance to film theory and cinema criticism. While Brewster's text veers away from the book under review, he summarises the key division as being one of the subject's relation to language: according to Brewster, Goldmann regards 'the subject as an instance unifying the world into significant wholes... relating to practical activity – where man is

²⁰⁵ Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism', *Screen*, 12.1 (1971), 27–36 (p. 30).

²⁰⁶ Comolli and Narboni, p. 32.

concerned, to labour and the making of history'. While for Barthes and Todorov, 'language and writing as activities precede every subject constitution, and the subject is an entirely secondary phenomenon, constituted by the language of the work and ambiguous and variable within it'.²⁰⁷

Drawing on the theoretical positions that had developed in France in the preceding years, critics such as Wollen began to disseminate a form of criticism which dealt not only with images but the systems and economies that brought them into being. What is notable about the scope of criticism in *7 Days* is its commentaries aspired to broach more general theoretical questions; the more specific review of certain works or artists remained the exception to its editorial scope – those exceptions being Fuller's attack on John Latham (see Ch.4) and Mulvey's review of Kubrick's film, which each reflected the guiding preoccupations of their authors; in Fuller's case, his frustration with the apolitical implications of Latham's project Artist Placement Group (APG), and what Fuller saw as the absence of class politics in APG's deployment of artists in industrial and commercial contexts; for Mulvey, the issue of bringing new interpretations to the products of mass culture that could explicitly criticise the sexual politics that lay behind them.

Unlike *INK*, which was closely invested in the cultural and artistic life of the counterculture in London, and the assumption that cultural and artistic activities themselves articulated the nature of non-conformist subjective liberation, *7 Days* was sensitive to new ways of discussing art in more analytical terms. If the critical debate at the immediate turn of the 1970s had been about the impasse of modernist aesthetics and the rebellion against its codification of the exchange between the verbal and the visual, these were however debates occurring within the institutional milieus of established artistic practice, even if the theoretical resources drawn on were varied. By contrast, *7 Days* opened a door to a theoretical discussion of general visual culture, the discussion turning to how meaning was made in the cultural production of mass culture, well away from the cultural enclave of visual art. To do so meant establishing that mass culture, by its ubiquity, was a necessary site of contestation. But while the turn to a criticism of a common culture of imagery was distant from the internal critical problems of institutionally defined visual art, *7 Days* was also not primarily a cultural journal. Unlike *Screen's* specialist focus, *7 Days's* editorial scope obliged it to incorporate its cultural

²⁰⁷ Ben Brewster, 'Structuralism in Film Criticism', *Screen*, 12.1 (1971), 49–58 (p. 50).

criticism into its wider political commitments. At the same time, *7 Days* held an ambiguous position in relation to its readership and political constituency: unlike the more directly militant publications that addressed the institutions of organised labour, *7 Days*'s roots in the New Left oriented it towards a less unified readership – metropolitan and interested in culture, and, while often involved in the organised politics of the British left, not so closely aligned to the established political forms of the trade unions and the Labour party.

These fault lines in and across readerships have a necessary impact on the character and form of art criticism. If readerships are constituencies of readers assembled by certain common interests, the comparison of editorial projects in these two cases permits a number of observations. As a field of cultural activity attempting to relate itself to a public, and aspiring to public legitimacy, visual art sat awkwardly in both counterculture and radical left debates because of art's association with private property in the way in which it was produced and consumed, regardless even of its content. In both *INK*'s coverage of visual art and the discussion of film culture in *7 Days*, what becomes central is the recognition that 'bourgeois' or 'straight' culture and ideology was not only manifest in the content of artistic production, but also ingrained in the commercial and economic systems that produced it. For visual art, this would have serious consequences for the credibility of any 'realist' form of art that could not accommodate a criticism of its own institutional dependencies.

Nevertheless the preoccupation with the structural conditions of artistic production are handled very differently in these two distinct editorial cultures: for the countercultural *INK*, while the problem of art's institutional and economic culture came to appear intractable, this continued to be opposed by a commitment to the forms of experience which privileged immediacy and lived experience, and which, in the sense of Brisley's 'universal human sensibility', would hopefully emerge despite the conventionalised and institutionalised forms of orthodox art. For the New Left *7 Days*, the opposition to bourgeois ideology was more a matter of consciously and explicitly forming a practice that operated both upon the codes of normative culture, and which addressed the economic and institutional conditions of cultural production through its own practice.

One of the implications of this was that in both cases, the audience for that work would in become more specialised, or distanced from the possibility of addressing

a more general public. One of the characteristics of critical coverage of art in *INK* is its use of conventional forms of art criticism – the review and the commentary – which were tied to events and exhibitions in the art ‘scene’ understood as a public culture: criticism of visual art is directed at major events (exhibitions at the Tate) and those exhibitions in an already present commercial context (for example, Flanagan’s exhibition at the Rowan Gallery). These forms of address sat in tension together – advocacy of new art in the case of the latter, but a more hostile attack on the institutional hierarchy of art’s institutional power in the former. In both *INK* and *7 Days*, when contemporary activity was addressed (in the case of Fuller’s diatribes against Morris, Christo and Latham), the hostility was directed at art’s institutional structures.

What *INK* lacked space and time for was any attempt at substantial theorising, although it belatedly (in the wake of the *Oz* trial) started out on a revision of its political position. By contrast, with the assimilation of a new and distinct theoretical agenda turning on the mass image of cinema, *7 Days* explored the possibility of a political intervention into cultural meaning, while sidestepping the crisis of legitimacy that afflicted even apparently radical artistic practices when they found themselves assimilated into the orthodox channels of official art.

Traversing this distinction, however, was the problem of subjective experience and its unstable relationship to what might be understood as the codifying processes of discourse. The fundamental opposition in approaches between these two titles is the privileging and de-privileging of the value of subjective experience and self-expression. From the counterculture had emerged the commitment to the liberation of one’s own desires from the codes of normative culture and social authority, which is in part why the underground press staunchly defended sexual liberation and the hedonistic values of drug-taking, artistic improvisation and non-hierarchical collective living. But by the first years of the 1970s this culture had become conscious of its own lack of reflection on its own limitations; for *INK*, this meant a regular discussion of the failure of independent culture in the face of encroaching commercialisation, particularly of rock music, and out of this, in turn, an acknowledgement of the counterculture’s marginalisation of women: an anonymous article titled ‘Cock Rock (and sexist songwriting)’ berated ‘high-energy rock as a blatant projection of male libido’, with its ‘attendant stage props – the ranks of mikestands, the mystique of sound generators, wahwahs, mixers (need I mention the phallic, thrusting guitars), the banked up speakers ready to release

2,000 watts at the turn of a knob. (So what if the 1,900 of these are superfluous – it's the potential, ie, potency that counts.)' Meanwhile, women continued to be 'defined by men for men':

... men are the image makers, and women are faced with a variety of images to identify with. The array of images in underground music are more poetic, more appealing – one can choose between a Maggie May and a Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands – but the principle is exactly the one we've known for long enough: woman portrayed in art, in literature, in the theatre) as goddess or slag, Virgin Mary or Morgan le Fay, always defined – never defining herself for herself.²⁰⁸

The counterculture had begun to discover that celebrating personal liberation had opened onto something it had not previously considered – that its politics of self-definition against 'the Man' would call into question 'the Man' (of a different sort) within the counterculture. Freeing yourself from the oppression of 'straight' culture became a matter of discovering every vestige of that culture in one's own motivations.

In a fashion, the libidinally-driven counterculture and the theoretically austere and 'scientific' approaches of French structuralism began to converge. Ideology, if Louis Althusser was right, was not only ingrained in lived experience but was also constitutive of it. The *Screen*-influenced semiological film criticism of *7 Days* brought the first noises of a theory in which images might be understood as working like a text – with the implication that images might therefore be interpreted – while formal decisions could be offered as disruptive of normative and conventional forms. Key to this was the question of whether the subject of images could claim any distance or autonomy from the text of the image.

In terms of criticism, this represented a shift from a subject interrogating their own experience through the verbal, to one in which both the work and its subject were both articulations of a text existing elsewhere. As the dogmatic positions of the old Left came under increasing scrutiny, and the failure of countercultural radicalism to account for itself became apparent, the idea that power should operate independently of a subject's conscious intentions made increasing sense, particularly for those attempting to explain their own marginal status in radical

²⁰⁸ 'Cock Rock (and Sexist Songwriting)', *INK*, 4 February 1972, p. 15.

politics. And it was the perspective of psychoanalysis – whose key motif was that latent motive preceded manifest intention – that would quickly provide the theoretical grounding for art criticism coming out of the women’s liberation movement.

Spare Rib

As *INK* and *7 Days* unravelled in early 1972, a group of women with roots in the alternative press had begun preparations for a magazine that would directly address the growing women’s movement. The Australian Marsha Rowe has worked on *Oz* in its first Australian incarnation, then *Vogue Australia*, before moving to Britain in 1968. By 1970 she was working on the British *Oz*, before becoming involved in the preparations for the magazine’s new venture *INK*. Rosie Boycott was working on another underground titled, *Frendz*, successor to the earlier *Friends*, which has folded with debts in May 1971.

Spare Rib responded to the growing disenchantment with the older radical and underground press among women becoming increasingly implicated in the women’s movement. Rowe and Boycott’s *Spare Rib* had developed out of meetings among a group of women who had variously been involved in *7 Days* and the milieu around *Oz*.²⁰⁹

Unlike the often confused and editorially conventional art coverage of *INK*, and the more theoretically driven but unresolved directions of cultural criticism in *7 Days*, *Spare Rib* established a regular focus on visual art from its first issue. Unlike those other titles, *Spare Rib* managed to establish a more convincing balance between a theoretical and political stance and a popular readership. The character of *Spare Rib*’s readership was of course central to its ongoing success, since unlike the factions of the radical left or the mixture of marginality and elitism cultivated by the counterculture, the women’s movement could lay claim, potentially, to a substantial demographic. Yet, announcing itself as ‘the new women’s magazine’, *Spare Rib*’s position was not overtly radical, at least not in the more familiar terms of political militancy: addressing itself to the concerns of women in the context of their everyday life, and turning on a core ethos of facing the problems of material self-sufficiency and independence alongside the need for psychological and cultural

²⁰⁹ See Fountain, pp. 156–58.

self-scrutiny to realise these, *Spare Rib* aligned itself loosely with the concerns of generation of metropolitan, educated women, no longer tolerant of the evident and complacent misogyny that persisted in the counterculture, mainstream culture and the workplace.

Spare Rib's early focus on visual art was immediately concerned with art by female artists whose work itself addressed women's experience. The first article on art, in the first issue, wasn't a review but a news item on a 'Women's Exhibition' at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, on the subject of 'Production-Reproduction' – 'a humorous and sharp expose of the economic and ideological oppression of women'.²¹⁰ A review of a show at the ICA by a textile artist, Maggie Norton, placed the artist's activity in the context of the traditional demotion of women's craft practice – 'women's home crafts have not been considered serious art' – the review quotes the artist's experience of reactions to her three-dimensional crochet wall-hangings:

Magritte once created a picture of a head with fabric wound round it which was very frightening. Fabric is something that is very closely associated with women and childhood, and for someone like me to make it into three dimensions, and to use shapes that are natural, even though not related to figures, can be disturbing.²¹¹

The acknowledgement of the possibility of an artistic practice not only by women, but about female experience *and* invested in the tropes of craft practice once assigned to women, as well the inference of a psychoanalytical dimension to iconography that might be repurposed by women artists, set up some important parameters for discussion, however slight the form of the review might have been. It did not take long for Rowe and Boycott to bring into the magazine a more elaborated perspective on art, with Rozsika Parker joining as contributing editor in February 1973. The Courtauld-trained art historian had earlier contributed a feature on female gallerists in the November issue, profiling Lucy Milton, Felicity Samuel and Hester Van Royen, though Parker's earnest questioning of her interviewees on their attitudes to women's success in the art world met with good-natured scepticism, leading Parker to observe ruefully that 'it is a strange

²¹⁰ 'Production-Reproduction', *Spare Rib*, July 1972, p. 10.

²¹¹ 'Art', *Spare Rib*, September 1973, p. 34.

phenomenon that successful women often show least comprehension of the aims of Women's Liberation'.²¹²

But with Parker's arrival on the masthead in the February issue, *Spare Rib* published an altogether less conciliatory essay by Mulvey, a theoretically-charged attack on the work of the artist Allen Jones, whose celebrations of fetishistic eroticism had long been a success in the art scene of the 1960s, had caused greater controversy with his infamous 1970 show of female mannequins, a group of works titled 'Women as Furniture'. Following that, Jones had published various collections of the source material from which much of his imagery of high-heeled, bondage-clad subjects was derived. 'By publishing these clippings', wrote Mulvey, 'Allen Jones gives vital clues, not only to the way he sees women, but to the place they occupy in the male unconscious in general.'²¹³ Mulvey's essay, drawing heavily on Freud's concepts of castration anxiety and fetishism, catalogues in detail the motifs in Jones's work that, for Mulvey, were phallic stand-ins.

Mulvey's essay is notable not simply for its lucid summary of often complex ideas, but because, rather than a generalized account of a theory, or its relevance as an interpretative tool, the text seeks to bring its theoretical proposition into close dialogue with the specifics of the artist's work. By closely describing Jones's extensive lexicon of erect nipples, constraining dresses, shoes, garter belts and other phallic stand-ins, and by attending to how his imagery was itself parasitical on the wider culture of imagery in the mass media, Mulvey made a convincing argument for what Jones's imagery, in psychoanalytic terms, actually represented – the reality of male narcissism upheld and reproduced by a male-dominated society.

There is also, however, an interesting ambiguity in Mulvey's criticism, inasmuch as Jones's extremely condensed iconography ends up being held up as a sort of exemplar, even though it is, at first glance, the object of Mulvey's critique. Mulvey had opened her article with the judgement that:

It is Allen Jones's mastery of the language of 'basic fetishist' that makes his work so rich, and compelling. His use of popular media is important not because he echoes them stylistically (pop art) but because he gets to the

²¹² Rosie [Rozsika] Parker, 'The Three Muses', *Spare Rib*, November 1972, pp. 26–27, 32 (p. 27).

²¹³ Laura Mulvey, 'You Don't Know What Is Happening, Do You, Mr. Jones?', *Spare Rib*, February 1973, pp. 13–16, 30.

heart of the way in which the female image has been requisitioned, to be re-created in the image of man.²¹⁴

Despite himself, then, Jones's work had value because of its exaggerated focus, an emphasis that in the hands of the critic could be enlisted as a rhetorical weapon. As Mulvey concludes:

Most people think of fetishism as the private taste of an odd minority, nurtured in secret. By revealing the way in which fetishistic images pervade, not just specialized publications, but the *whole of the mass media*, Allen Jones throws a new light on woman as spectacle. The message of fetishism concerns not woman, but the narcissistic wound she represents for man... They are being turned all the time into objects of display, to be looked at and gazed at and stared at by men. Yet in a real sense, women are not there at all.²¹⁵

Mulvey's text was an example of criticism that brought theory in to actively make the meaning of the work by an act of confrontation and transvaluation – Jones's work was good (or at least critically valuable), *because* it was bad. What is interesting is that by engaging with the work, Mulvey still had to make an account of its particularities – so while the more obvious iconography of fetishism was easy to discuss, one finds Mulvey writing with more care and interest about more recent works by Jones in which images of female bodies balancing, teetering or falling, or otherwise under the influence of gravity, are less easily interpreted. Similarly, Mulvey passes quickly over works in which the male body appears in androgynous combination with the female body.

Spare Rib's coverage of art responded to and facilitated the increasing tempo of artistic activity in the women's movement. Parker's art-historical background allowed her to bring a first foray into the discussion of the erasure of female artists from art history, with her photo-essay 'Old Mistresses' in the April issue.²¹⁶ (It turned out that the research that supported the pictures had been the work of an American academic, who complained in the next issue that her material had been used, uncredited in Parker's article.) News articles and reviews began to report on

²¹⁴ Mulvey, 'You Don't Know What Is Happening, Do You, Mr. Jones?', p. 14.

²¹⁵ Mulvey, 'You Don't Know What Is Happening, Do You, Mr. Jones?', p. 30.

²¹⁶ Rosie [Rozsika] Parker, 'Old Mistresses', *Spare Rib*, April 1973, pp. 11–13.

self-organised exhibitions by women artists: by June 1973 *Spare Rib* was reporting on two very different exhibitions; *Woman Power*, at the Swiss Cottage Library, and *Three Friends*, at the soon-to-close Gallery House, both in London.²¹⁷ Self-organisation, in the wake of the establishment of the women's workshop within the Artist's Union in early 1972, had become an important practical and political focus, emphasised by Parker's interview with Roselee Goldberg (then organising exhibitions and events at the Royal College of Art), in which Goldberg discussed her experiences of feminist artists' activities in the US. Out of *Three Friends* came reports of the preparations for *Women's Work*, which took up the issue of the value of women's 'domestic art'. Self-organisation was integral to self-representation. As the organising group's statement declared:

While it has always been recognised as man's proper role to strive to go beyond everyday existence into the expression and interpretation of it, beyond functional production to the creation of objects designed to be seen as well as used, women's work is rarely looked at in this light. It is time for women to come out of their artistic purdah and share the products of their creativity with others.²¹⁸

With those debates emerging in an evolving network of practitioners, the place of the critic was again uncertain. What is interesting in this respect about Mulvey's essay on Jones is that, almost exceptionally in *Spare Rib*, it offered a monographic analysis and critical evaluation of a single artist.

The other exception was Mulvey's almost counterpoint essay on Penelope Slinger, published in November 1973. Here, Mulvey discussed in detail Slinger's exhibition *Opening*, an extensive installation of sculptures whose elaborate symbolism of orality and sexuality (food, mouth, vagina) allowed Mulvey the scope for a further discussion of psychoanalytical theory, while placing Slinger as a feminist revision of Surrealism: '[Slinger's work] is a continuation of their campaign to break down the barriers between unconscious and conscious. But whereas the Surrealists showed

²¹⁷ 'Spare Time', *Spare Rib*, June 1973, pp. 27–28. 'Woman Power' was organised and exhibited work by Monica Sjo, Ann Berg, Liz Moore, Beverley Skinner and Roslyn Smythe. 'Three Friends' comprised Susan Hiller, Carla Liss and Barbara Schwarz.

²¹⁸ 'Women Are Secret Artists', *Spare Rib*, September 1973, pp. 42–43.

little interest in feminine phantasy, *Opening* showed us how powerfully a woman is able to transform Surrealism.’²¹⁹

Pointedly, Slinger is reported to have wanted to close the show with the work’s ritual destruction by fire, Mulvey concluding that Slinger ‘is now working on another book, her autobiography, a mode of pro-creation and display which avoids the over-valuation of object art and does not demand its own destruction’.²²⁰

Slinger’s move away from the ‘over-valuation of object art’ would see he abandon visual art entirely. Slinger’s case is exceptional, since she accessed, almost uniquely and albeit briefly, a commercial situation by a female gallerist (Angela Flowers), to present a feminist artistic practice. But Slinger’s was an isolated case, while artists aligning themselves with the women’s movement developed an organising and exhibition culture more rooted in collective action. The commercial market would soon suffer the effects of economic recession and inflation. (Lucy Milton would close her gallery in September 1975). Mulvey’s writing on contemporary artists in a non-specialist venue is similarly unusual in this respect. The question of specialism is here a key issue. *Spare Rib*’s early coverage of visual may have been partisan, but it was more concerned with facilitating a network of contacts and information than platforming the arguments being had among women artists. It is interesting to note that in their introduction to their 1985 anthology of archival texts and documents on the art and art criticism of the women’s movement, Parker and Griselda Pollock make little mention of *Spare Rib*: the section of their introduction headed ‘women and the press’, the publications noted are all feminist *art* publications, or notable issues of art-specialist publications.²²¹

In another sense, the interpretative role of the critic was vulnerable to the documentary and post-media tendency in art, which feminist artistic practice was quick to assimilate. Mulvey’s articles are about, and dependent on, iconography. The earlier items on ‘Woman Power’ and ‘Three Friends’ hinted at an antagonism toward figurative art, and a more favourable attention to more conceptual and post-media work. Art as documentation and process was also at stake in this, and the artist’s interview came to the fore: Parker would go on to interview Judy Clark (whose exhibition at The Garage in late 1973 had featured displays of menstrual

²¹⁹ Laura Mulvey, ‘The Hole Truth’, *Spare Rib*, November 1973, pp. 37–38 (p. 37).

²²⁰ Mulvey, ‘The Hole Truth’, p. 38.

²²¹ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, ‘Introduction’, in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970-85* (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 14–15.

blood, used bandages, nail clippings and other bodily waste²²²) and Margaret Priest, a figurative artist, whose work Parker barely discusses for its imagery, instead concentrating on Priest's biography and personal life.²²³

Mulvey's last contribution on visual art to *Spare Rib* would be in December 1976, in her review of Mary Kelley's exhibition at the ICA, *Post-Partum Document*. By then, the idea of critical evaluation was of less interest to Mulvey. The work was no longer to be looked at and interpreted, but to be read and (with some difficulty, Mulvey admitted), understood:

It is quite clear from the attention Mary Kelly's exhibition has received in the establishment press that it was a direct provocation to conventional concepts of "art". It is the form of the exhibition, its emphasis on work rather than art-object-for-critical-evaluation that causes so much outrage. A painting of a mother changing her baby's nappy would be easily overlooked as kitsch, but not so with dirty nappy liners annotated and placed within a discourse that needs work to be unravelled, and refuses to place the figure of the mother on view.²²⁴

With the responsibility to genre and iconographic conventions dispensed with, Mulvey could recommend a more pedagogical activity:

The exhibition comes within a radical art practice which refuses to see art works as purely objects in themselves but rather takes an exhibition space to give documentation the force of argument. It deprives the object of any market value and its meaning only truly emerges if the work put in by the artist is complemented by work put in by the spectator in reading the documentation and understanding the theories.²²⁵

Rather than intervene with the critic's interpretation, Mulvey here defers, as others had done earlier, to the didactic imperative of the exhibited work. Here, the artwork's status as object was also severed from its complicity with the art market, through its incorporation into the criteria of cognitive value of the document.

²²² Rosie [Rozsika] Parker, 'Body Works', *Spare Rib*, May 1974, pp. 37–38.

²²³ Rosie [Rozsika] Parker, "'Still out of Breath in Arizona" and Other Pictures', *Spare Rib*, June 1974.

²²⁴ Laura Mulvey, 'Post-Partum Document: Mary Kelly', *Spare Rib*, December 1976, p. 40.

²²⁵ Mulvey, 'Post-Partum Document: Mary Kelly'.

That shift was part of the rapid evolution of theory in feminist art and criticism, of which Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* was a pivotal work. What distinguished it from work by, for example, Slinger or Clark, was its explicit mobilisation of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory within the work, as Mulvey noted. From 1973 to the presentation of *Post-Partum Document* in 1976, the incorporation of new psychoanalytical readings into feminist political and artistic activity had gathered pace. In the autumn of 1975 Mulvey's essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', developed from a paper Mulvey had presented in the US in the Spring of 1973, appeared in *Screen*.²²⁶ 1974 saw the first publication of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*.²²⁷ Kelly and other feminists had been members of a Lacan Study Group, one reading group to emerge out of the Women's Liberation Workshop.²²⁸ The collaborative nature of that work, of assimilating Lacanian psychoanalytical theory to support a different feminist criticism of subjectivity – and a new approach to the criticism of art – drove a different approach to the making of artworks, whose forms were themselves attempts to tangible expression of such theoretical developments – for example, Wollen and Mulvey's film *Riddles of the Sphinx*, released in 1977. In such collaborative cultures of theoretical and practical activity, the critic's position as distinct from the interest of those collaborators no longer served a purpose.

As this chapter has outlined, the role of the critic's intervention would flicker in and out of view as the influence of new theoretical perspectives began to be tested on the territory of art writing. That entry was a process of modification and translation: editorial platforms that took a generalist approach to society and culture, regardless of their political orientation, each attempted their own emphasis on art and on the broader issue of visual culture. In each, the coherence or incoherence of a theoretical project was mediated by the contingencies of the publication's approach to conventions of art writing; the review, the commentary, the monographic essay, the polemic.

Theories that had had no place in the orthodox venues of visual art writing at the turn of the 1970s had found their way into the non-orthodox publications in the

²²⁶ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6–18.

²²⁷ Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London: Allen Lane, 1974).

²²⁸ Other members included Parveen Adams, Rosalind Coward, Elisabeth Cowie, Rosalind Delmar and Jacqueline Rose. See email correspondence, Mary Kelly, 'A Secret Agreement: An Era Defined by the Events of 1968' <<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/talks-and-lectures/mary-kelly-conversation-hans-ulrich-obrist/secret-agreement>> [accessed 8 June 2016].t

early years of the decade. Theories of images and of iconography took on new authority as the question of the power of mass culture's political function came to be further questioned in the wake of the defeat of the uprisings of 1968. Film criticism became a key articulation of the power of the image, but it required, too, a theory of the power of images over subjects. And with the idea that subjects were subjected without their understanding, psychoanalysis offered an account of this; an account that the counterculture, in its unexamined masculinity, discovered to its cost when confronted with the emergent women's movement, and its own attempt to understand the source of women's marginalisation against the promises of personal liberation. Visual art and its critics are, perhaps necessarily, a transient presence in and through these publications. As visual art's crisis of form had in part revealed that discourses defined objects, the counterculture had also, in some sense, underwritten the abolition of discourse in the name of immediacy and authentically lived experience. And yet, if the post-structuralists were right, experience itself was a text, written by someone else, immediacy merely a convenient fiction. The notion of an underlying 'text' to experience becomes influential almost as a direct reaction to the impossibility of sustaining the idea of authentic experience without language.

The mediating experience of the critic, then, inhabited an insecure position, between the ethics of spontaneity that required no reflection, and a theory of structure that questioned the subject's capacity for reflection outside of the structures that preceded it. Yet theoretical developments could not avoid having to address the specific products a culture – whether in the mass culture of advertising or film images, or the narrower culture of visual art. So, in Mulvey's monographic reviews, for example, there is a shifting tension between general theoretical claims and the success or failure of these to entirely account for the evidence of the work, eventually resolved in a work that is itself constituted as an exposition of theory, making any work of interpretation redundant. Yet as the discussion of these alternative publications suggest, the mediation performed by criticism might not be simply that between the work and theory, but is at a more fundamental level, the mediation of the work and a public. That artworks should even be of interest to a readership – that a readership, or public, should be petitioned to give attention to artworks – is a problem revealed more starkly in publications constituted by their generalism, rather than their specialism, dependent on the broader interests and commitments of a particular readership.

The critic's position in these contexts required a negotiation, between the claims and interests of an artistic community and those of a bigger public, locating points of correspondence and common ground, from which to draw legitimacy for the special claim that art had 'the power to change people'. For the counterculture, that claim was for art as experience against discourse; for the structuralist and psychoanalytic critics, that claim was for art as discourse against experience. But beyond that opposition was the nature of discourse as a practice binding subjects politically, whether as an expression of hierarchical power imposed, or as a project for practice collectively agreed.

Chapter 3

Looking for the subject: Peter Fuller and the new critics, 1970-76

*Last Sunday I was in London for the demonstration of which you have undoubtedly heard... The atmosphere in Cambridge is electric.*²²⁹

*... as my analysis progressed, I realised how uncomfortable I was, even among the theoretical Marxists, as I watched them dissolving this sensuous, living, loving, potentially fully human being, into a desert of decentred, linguistic constructs.*²³⁰

Oxbridge critics

The turn of the 1970s, from 1969 to 1972, was a period marked by the development of a generation of artists who took deliberate control of the critical discourse that legitimated their work. In that moment, the status and role of the traditional critic – as institutional gatekeeper, and transmitter of critical traditions – was thrown into particularly stark light. For a generation of younger critics to appear in the early 1970s, the problem of how to position oneself in relationship to the developments of the new art became a key preoccupation. How might the critic – licensed to pass judgement on contemporary activity and yet separate from the milieu of artistic production – resolve the problem of his or her institutional power, at a time when the politics of the power of institutions over artistic practice, and the self-legitimation of artists by their own critical production, were closely related issues?

Such questions are of particular significance in Britain since the beginning of the 1970s was marked by the appearance of a number of young critics who were installed in positions of considerable influence. This chapter takes as its main subject the writing of the young critic Peter Fuller, one of a generation of university graduates who quickly established themselves as art critics, while relating themselves broadly to radical developments in art and in politics. Before turning to

²²⁹ Peter Fuller, 'Letter to George Fuller', 20 March 1968, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 9716/1.

²³⁰ Peter Fuller, *Marches Past* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986), p. 118.

Fuller in detail, I examine the relative position of two of his peers, Richard Cork and Caroline Tisdall, and their attempt to align their enthusiasms for radical art with their status as critics for newspapers of national standing.

It is one of the more unusual developments of the period that writers only recently out of university quickly found themselves cast as critics writing for a national audience. Richard Cork (b. 1947), who had left Cambridge in the summer of 1969, took the job of art critic at the *Evening Standard* later that year. Caroline Tisdall (b. 1945), an Oxford graduate who had completed her MA in art history at the Courtauld Institute in the summer of 1968 and had immediately begun to teach art history, became the art critic for *The Guardian* in early 1970.

In the culture of mainstream art criticism in Britain such appointments were unprecedented.²³¹ But they were perhaps only one the more extreme expression of the shifts towards a more critically self-conscious approach to artistic practice among a generation of artists and critics who would come of age at the end of the 1960s. Underpinning this shift was the increasing influence of theoretical and critical practice in both the teaching and publishing venues of art. As I discuss in Ch.1, the artistic milieu of informal and self-generated criticism came increasingly under the sway of new, unorthodox theoretical tendencies that had little to do with the aesthetic traditions of the earlier twentieth century. Meanwhile, the concentration of influence and power of certain critics' voices during the 1960s raised the bar for critical self-reflection, by proposing (if not necessarily fulfilling) a rationale and authority for objective criteria and the judgements that might issue from them. A key aspect of this authority was related to a more general development – the growing presence of practitioners – both artists and critics – whose education was more closely tied to the formal disciplines of the university academy than the informal conventions of master-student tutelage of the art school studio. The young critics who emerged at the turn of the 1970s were no exception to this. As I note in Ch. 1, *Studio International's* junior staff was drawn from the postgraduate course at the Courtauld Institute, even if, at that time, the Courtauld was only just beginning to make modernist art a matter for art historical study.

²³¹ Cork recounts that Charles Wintour (then editor of the *Evening Standard*), had called David Somerset, chairman of Marlborough Fine Art, for suggestions for a new art critic. According to Cork, Somerset asked his secretary, who happened to be in the room, for any ideas. The secretary mentioned that she had recently met Cork at a party. Richard Cork, Conversation with the author, 2010.

Such individuals were no longer so closely tied to the critical milieus of practicing artists, although they were socially implicated with their artists peers – Tisdall recounts that her route to the job of critic of the Guardian was through her friend and drinking partner, the painter John McLean, who, according to Tisdall, had passed on the job when it was proposed to him by the incumbent, Norbert Lynton.²³² The demand for competent and informed commentators on visual art, for writers who could articulate the developments taking shape in current art, and who could represent the interests of a younger generation, especially in the atmosphere of cultural foment and political tension that characterised the closing years of the 60s, clearly informs such apparently unusual appointments in among the broadsheets press. (The demographics of the post-war period had its part to play in this: between 1961 and 1971, the number of those aged between 16 and 30 increased by 1,36m.²³³)

While figures such as Cork, Tisdall and Guy Brett (art critic at the *Times*) rose to prominence quickly in the first years of the 1970s, their attitude to their role as critics was framed by their partisan championing of artistic developments that appeared to challenge the traditional art establishment, developments which themselves had broader cultural associations with, and affinities to the social and political radicalism of the period. Brett, having been central to the establishment of the gallery *Signals* in 1964, was an advocate for kinetic art and a channel for Latin American art. Cork would quickly become a strong supporter of American minimal art, while bringing attention to British and American Conceptualism. Tisdall found an affinity with developments in European art, and in particular German art around the artist Joseph Beuys, with whom Tisdall became personally involved.²³⁴ In this, their alignment with recent developments in American, Latin American and European art were a territorial challenge as well as an artistic one, since in many respects those artistic developments were marked by the internationalist character of avant-garde artistic circles beginning to make themselves evident.

The positions these critics took were broadly supportive of the new developments, and instinctively resistant to conservative defences of both old genres and old

²³² Caroline Tisdall, Conversation with the author, 2011.

²³³ Source: 'England and Wales Population Pyramid [Adobe Flash]', *Office for National Statistics*, 2013 <<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/interactive/england-and-wales-population-pyramid---dvc2/index.html>> [accessed 23 January 2016].

²³⁴ Tisdall saw herself as a 'Europeanist', more than an internationalist, suspicious of the reach of American imperialism. Tisdall, 'Conversation with the Author'.

institutions. Tasked with offering an overview of current artistic activities to a broad readership, they provided coverage of major exhibitions and established institutional events, but were eager to review exhibitions in the more ambitious galleries that were being established in the early years of the 1970s and – particularly in the case of Tisdall – to cover independent and artist-run venues.

At a simple level, the desire to support new developments in the public forum offered to the broadsheet critic entailed offering a more pluralist view of activity, particularly in a moment when private galleries were being established to give a platform to these developments. So by early 1972 Tisdall could report on the appearance of conceptual art, not in public exhibitions, but in ostensibly commercial galleries. 'In the case of conceptual art, or any non-object based art come to that, the wise monkeys who dole out our cultural rations seem to have decided to see nothing, hear nothing, and say nothing until it has all passed over like a virus,' Tisdall notes wryly, observing that for years, 'anyone interested in following its development must still look to a handful of publications and four private galleries: the Lisson, Situation, Nigel Greenwood, and a newcomer, Jack Wendler'.²³⁵

Supporting in print what the 'wise monkeys' of officialdom chose to ignore produced its own problems for the critic. Tisdall's predecessor Lynton, in his farewell column before stepping down as the *Guardian's* art critic, could still be confident in the critic's 'self-appointed authority': 'yes, the critic does claim superior knowledge – not superior to everybody's but superior to most people's. And why not? He spends more time on and in his chosen field than all but a few'.²³⁶ But with the arrival of conceptual art, Tisdall couldn't be so sure: 'the role of the critic/commentator in all this must obviously be redefined, perhaps even discarded, at least in its present formalist form', Tisdall argued, since 'whether the concept is presented as a photograph... or as a grouping of words, its effectiveness depends on the knowledge, experience, and receptivity of the receiver'. Tisdall concluded that since conversation with the artist would elucidate the work, the 'filling in of reference and motivation should be the business of the writer as intermediary. Certainly a simply interpretative approach would defeat the artist's intention.'²³⁷

²³⁵ Caroline Tisdall, 'Art without an Object', *Guardian* (London, 25 January 1972), p. 8.

²³⁶ Norbert Lynton, 'Seeing It as It Is', *Guardian* (London, 27 June 1970), p. 8.

²³⁷ Tisdall, 'Art without an Object'.

Deferring to the artist the responsibility for the explanation of the work meant that the critic took the role of intermediary, 'filling in' the necessary context to transmit the work to his readership. In this situation, interpretation could have little meaning or purpose. Cork would come to a similar conclusion, though in a more positive vein, when selecting artists for the 'Critic's Choice' exhibition at the long-established Arthur Tooth & Sons Gallery the following year. Titling his introductory essay 'The Critic Stripped Bare By His Artists, Even?', Cork mused on the limitations that encroached on the mainstream art critic. The critic, he observed, 'becomes a reporter rather than a shaper of current activities... He describes, with sensitivity and a praiseworthy attention to duty, but never lays himself open to the charge of rash advocacy.'²³⁸ But, Cork argued, advocacy must be the outcome of the critic's full commitment to assessing the work of his moment. The artists of a new generation of English artists 'share a common desire to frame their own language, to operate within spheres owing little or nothing to the conventions accepted by their seniors.'²³⁹ As Cork went on:

... whatever angle the [the artist] chooses as his entrée has to be grasped by the critic, who must attend closely to this drastic reorientation of art if he wants to retain any validity at all. The traditional hierarchy, which dictated that the artist produced and the critic pronounced, has lost much of its meaning with today's best work. Verdicts can still be arrived at, of course, and should be delivered with resolution. But because the artist now increasingly dictates the overall structure of his activity, and often regards it as indivisible from quality and content, the critic has to ensure that he takes full account of this structure's effect on – and relationship with – the nature of art. In other words, the extent to which artists enrich the dialogue about their putative vocabulary must be carefully considered in any critical comment, and supremely so when they put themselves forward as verbal theorists.²⁴⁰

Cork's stress on advocacy remained couched in a question of judgement, though here the implied distance between artist and critic had shifted, no longer a

²³⁸ Richard Cork, 'The Critic Stripped Bare by His Artists, Even?', in *Critic's Choice: 1973 Selection by Richard Cork* (London: Arthur Tooth & Sons Ltd, 1973). The exhibiting artists were: Conrad Atkinson, David Dye, Gilbert And George, John Hilliard, John Latham, Bob Law, Richard Long, Gerald Newman, Nice Style and John Stezaker

²³⁹ Cork, 'The Critic Stripped Bare by His Artists, Even?'

²⁴⁰ Cork, 'The Critic Stripped Bare by His Artists, Even?'

hierarchy of the critic over the artist, the pronouncer over the producer. Instead, the seat of authority was handed over to the artist, while the critic's role was to act as competent ambassador, having assured himself, within reasonable margins of probability, of the rightness of the artistic production he would champion:

...a critic must justify his right to exist, and the linchpin of that existence demands that he act on his enthusiasms, proclaim them with as tenable a combination of reason and passion as he can muster. Only thus can he fulfil his self-appointed role of judge and preacher, scourge and ally, historian and prophet.²⁴¹

Cork's view of the critic was apostolic, and vaunting in its ambition to bring the good news of the new art with a conviction about its value, just as it might draw on the authority of historical knowledge to project the course of the future. Clearly, this model of relationship between artists, their interlocutors and their publics had little to do with writing about art from the perspective of a public. Cork's fascination with art that questioned the preconceptions on which it was based had its roots in a formative encounter with the Richard Hamilton-organised Marcel Duchamp retrospective at the Tate Gallery in 1966, an artist whose works 'asked to be evaluated as products of the artist not as a maker but as a thinker: their physical presence was completely overshadowed by their conceptual meaning'.²⁴² Reviewing the Hayward Gallery's turning-point exhibition of British conceptual art 'The New Art' in 1972, Cork could happily conclude of Art-Language's 'relentless examination of art theory and criticism' that 'such concerns impinge directly on my own function'.²⁴³

The emergence of artists who wrote their own critical interrogations of their work, and who further incorporated that interrogation as part of their work, presented a problem for critics like Cork: the new forms of artistic practice that had emerged during the 1960s (kinetic art, Op art and performance or 'happenings', among others) often presented critical justifications in the form of manifestoes and statements of intent, but the legitimacy of an artist's critical self-justification could easily be put in doubt, as Cork himself does in an early review of a big show of

²⁴¹ Cork, 'The Critic Stripped Bare by His Artists, Even?'

²⁴² Cork, 'The Critic Stripped Bare by His Artists, Even?'

²⁴³ Cork, Richard, 'The New Art', *London Evening Standard* (London, 17 August 1972); repr. in Richard Cork, *Everything Seemed Possible: Art in the 1970s / Richard Cork* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 69–70.

kinetic art at the Hayward Gallery in the *Standard*. Cork framed his attack on 'the fallacy of kinetic art' in a discussion of the artist's statement: 'When artists issue grandiose manifestos they play a very dangerous game; and if the concrete products of their ideas are found wanting, they cannot reasonably complain if the audience reaction becomes vituperative rather than merely dismissive.'²⁴⁴ It is interesting here that Cork identifies the artist's manifesto as something to be tested and challenged, rather than transmitted or supported. Cork's criticism of kinetic art turns on a preoccupation with its manipulative and sensationalist imposition on the viewer. At this point still holding on to the critic's authority, Cork is happy to reach for the distinction of the idea of art from mass culture, criticising kinetic art for its complicity in a situation where 'all the boundaries which used to separate art with a capital A from less exalted activities have been resoundingly flattened, and the critic is pushed out on his own into a world that denies the existence of any pictorial laws save those of the artist's ingenuity'.²⁴⁵

Cork would soon change his tune about the artist's critical authority over their own practice, but perhaps what is important here is that the extreme positivistic and utopian rhetoric of 1960s avant-gardism can still be typified within the tradition of the avant-garde manifesto – a declaration of principle and a call towards positive action. By contrast to these, the artists who self-legitimation Cork was happy to support were those whose work proposed what appeared as a more sceptical and expansive questioning of grounding assumptions about the artwork's ontological and institutional status. That subjective experience and its relationship to reflective judgement is at stake here also unsettles the conventional territory of the critic – that of individual experience, and the process of articulating the qualities of that experience to a reader.

That the 'maker' should be a 'thinker' while dictating 'the overall structure of his activity' left little room for a response from those outside of that structure, since the critic could make only limited appeal to the value or significance of his or her own experience of the work as independent of the work's asserted conditions. If artists were proposing works which synthesised such disciplines and specialisms as philosophy, science and linguistics, a critic couldn't necessarily rely on the authority of the specialist discourses normally available to him. But behind that lay

²⁴⁴ Cork, Richard, 'The Fallacy of Kinetic Art', *London Evening Standard* (London, 30 September 1970); repr. in Cork, *Everything Seemed Possible : Art in the 1970s*.

²⁴⁵ Cork, Richard, 'The Fallacy of Kinetic Art'.

a more fundamental question: whether the critic stood in as representative of a collective experience of a work – the possibility of a public – or effectively sided with the artist’s proposition, acting as pedagogical intermediary. In a long review of *The New Art*, Tisdall noted stiffly that ‘since many of the arguments involved concern the nature of art itself, it is not produced specifically with a public in mind.’²⁴⁶

In reviewing *The New Art*, Tisdall observed a particular division within the works on show:

The only thing that all the artists have in common is questioning. They certainly do show up the inadequacy of our current critical language. A cogent discussion of Art Language’s methods, or [Victor] Burgin’s or [John] Stezaker’s, requires a good grounding in logic, mathematics, philosophy, semantics and information theory.²⁴⁷

But on the other hand;

... the works of Richard Long, Hamish Fulton and in a way Gilbert and George defy criticism in another way. They utterly discard the notion of context, *descriptive or aesthetic discussion of the art are equally irrelevant*, they are firmly anti-explanations, and direct questioning is likely to meet with a blank.²⁴⁸

So in one direction, the artist’s discursive activity exceeded the critic’s and the public’s competence; but in the other, artworks and artists also refused to engage in *discussion*. There was, in other words, either an excess of discourse or a lack of it, but in each situation, the possibility of a public forming around an *object* through a public discussion mediated and directed by the discursive competence of the critic was curtailed.

The problem of the artist’s relationship with a public was here also a problem of the public institution’s responsibility to that public, and the critic’s relationship to all three. Underlying such discussions are the institutional assumptions of the preceding decade – that artistic innovation was a principle to be supported by public patronage, and that artistic innovation was something to be communicated

²⁴⁶ Caroline Tisdall, ‘Art Think’, *Guardian*, 17 August 1972, p. 10.

²⁴⁷ Tisdall, ‘Art Think’.

²⁴⁸ Tisdall, ‘Art Think’. My emphasis.

to a notion of a national – or at least metropolitan – public. The benign paternalism of public policy towards contemporary art was reflected in the enthusiasm of the fourth estate and its new young art critics. For Cork, what was most missing in London were:

...publicly run centres committed to the three-pronged belief that a nation's art activity fossilises without a continuously prodded awareness of current developments; that the divide between the man in the street and modern work will grow ever more unbridgeable unless such a service is offered all the time; and that any country becomes hopelessly insular if support for its native practitioners is not accompanied by a readiness to extend an open invitation to art on the broadest of international bases.²⁴⁹

Yet the pedagogical impulses of the advocate-critics continually found itself up against the problem of the public's reception. In this, pedagogy had its limits, since at some point the public's experience could not be brought into correspondence with the artist's programme for his work. So, in a short but involved review of the 1972 *Systems* group exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, Tisdall pointed to the problem of explanation versus experience, bemoaning the 'wall of public opinion that still rejects the abstract as exclusive and incomprehensible':

The artists of the "Systems" group show are obviously extremely concerned with this, and have made big efforts to explain to their public. They show working drawings, stages towards the final work, provide slides suggesting historical links, and examples of parallel developments in music and poetry. Yet sadly enough, in a wider democratic sense, the communication fails. This is certainly a subjective reaction, but for me the key lies in one of the pieces illustrating the musical parallel. Steve Reich's compositions offer a step by step aural exposition of the processes used to build the work. But he manages to build the effect into a whole that transcends the hermetic sense of order. *It becomes a personal experience within a wider structure, and it is on this perceptual level, I feel, that the "Systems" exhibition falls down.*²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Cork, Richard, 'London's Failure and the Future of the Tate', *Evening Standard*, 3 January 1974. Repr. in Cork, *Everything Seemed Possible: Art in the 1970s*, p. 283.

²⁵⁰ Caroline Tisdall, 'Systems Exhibition at the Whitechapel', *Guardian*, 21 March 1972, p. 12. My emphasis.

Tisdall's remarks point to the complex relationship between experience and explanation, or that of aesthetic effect requiring deliberation versus a rationalised, 'conceptual' or programmatic approach from which results a public form of presentation, but in which the public's response is necessarily reconstructive of the artist's intentions. Though she avoids the term 'aesthetic', any effect that 'transcends' a sense of order, as a 'personal experience' on a 'perceptual level' highlights the split between artistic programme and public reception.

The question of specialism and discipline and its relation to subjective experience isn't incidental. Tisdall had studied art history as an undergraduate, and Cork had studied English literature, only turning to art history as a second subject in his fourth year at Cambridge. (Cork recalls that art history was 'not taken very seriously' at Cambridge at the time.²⁵¹) Tisdall in particular was prolific in her coverage of historical shows of modernist art. Literary and art-historical competences, then, could be aligned with a public project of advocacy of artists to close the gap between them and a national public, but the more unstable nature of artistic affect – its subjective, individual, experiential or even aesthetic power – was harder to reconcile to such a goal.

Peter Fuller

While Cork and Tisdall grappled with the constraints and opportunities of dealing with the general readerships of the large-circulation press, another young Cambridge graduate was beginning to establish a less high-profile and more complicated career as a freelance critic. Peter Fuller (b. 1947) had, in the aftermath of the Anti-Vietnam War protests of 17 March 1968, gravitated towards Marxism and the New Left, while harbouring ambitions to write about art. Fuller, unlike Cork and Tisdall, attempted to take a more explicitly partisan political approach to criticism and writing about art, while becoming involved in writing for the radical political and underground press in London.

Fuller is a complex figure in the developments in art criticism in Britain in the 1970s and 80s. Coming from a middle-class family of strict Baptists, enduring an unhappy adolescence at public school, Fuller's time as an undergraduate at Cambridge were marked by episodes of emotional and psychological instability.

²⁵¹ Cork, 'Conversation with the Author'.

This early history is one Fuller himself would later make deliberately public, especially with the publication of his memoir *Marches Past*, in 1986, which covers the period of the mid-1970s, during which Fuller was in psychoanalysis. In part, his admission of his psychological and emotional difficulties was tied to his recantation of his early political and aesthetic commitments. Fuller had early on been influenced by the writing of John Berger. As he would later write:

Berger once wrote of Frederick Antal, the art historian: 'More than any other man (he) taught me how to write about art.' What Berger said of Antal, I can say of him: more than any other man, he taught me how to write about art. It is as simple and complex as that. I have never been Berger's pupil in any formal sense; nor did I study his work and extract from it any theory, formula, or 'method'. Rather Berger taught me how to know and to see for myself.²⁵²

There are few historical critical examinations of Fuller's emergence and status during the early 1970s. Fuller's professional activity as a critic was certainly established by the early 1970s, through prolific contributions to the established art specialist press in London – *Arts Review*, *Connoisseur* and *Art & Artists* (although not, it should be noted, to *Studio International*) – and by the writing of more ambitious if sporadic commentary pieces for *New Society*. And yet Fuller's status as a critic is usually discussed with regards to his activity from around 1976, where he became a significant figure in the debates and polemics that coursed through *Studio International* under Richard Cork's editorship and the nascent editorial positions of *Art Monthly* and *Artscribe*. Fuller is in part responsible for this focus, since he made efforts to distance himself from his earlier writing. By 1980, Fuller could explain away his early writing as:

... confused, distorting and immature: it was permeated by all sorts of distorting ideological and psychological elements. There is very little that I wrote before 1975 which I could possibly endorse now.²⁵³

²⁵² Peter Fuller, *Seeing Berger: A Revaluation of Ways of Seeing* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), p. 1.

²⁵³ Peter Fuller, 'Introduction', in *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), pp. 10–14 (p. 12).

In an early critique of Fuller's career following his death in a car accident in 1990, Julian Stallabrass observed the unusual subjective and personal focus of Fuller's writing:

If it is difficult not to be personal in a critique of Fuller, this is because every issue he touched was personalized. The reader is rarely spared an intermediate stage through which Fuller passed on his way to a conclusion. Old errors were not concealed but endlessly recanted. This usually involved the 'murder' of his intellectual father and personal mentor John Berger, whose opinions the youthful Fuller had thoroughly digested and frequently regurgitated.²⁵⁴

This self-historicising aspect of Fuller's activity poses problems for an assessment of his early career. If he appeared to start out as a critic of the left, Fuller turned, through the 1980s, into what detractors would identify as a conservative whose resort to notions of national character and tradition chimed with the cultural nostalgia of the Thatcherite New Right, particularly with the launch of Fuller's own magazine, the traditionalist *Modern Painters*, in 1988. Fuller's own later self-narrating of his career as a critic during the 1970s obscures the ambiguities and nuances of his shifting positions, particularly as they operated in the context of the artistic-political debates in the latter half of the 1970s.

Those ambiguities represent a complicated interaction between the aspirations of art critics and their political commitments and alignments as the 1970s progressed, just as much as these were framed by the professional opportunities for publication afforded by the art press. Personal connections were also a factor. As Neil Mulholland sceptically remarks in his analysis of the art-critical polemics of the years after 1976 and the machinations and manoeuvrings of the 'crisis critics' (which included Fuller and Cork):

On the one hand, Fuller's 'radical' views ... would never have been heard without the rapid expansion of the (private) art press in Britain that took place in 1976... On the other hand Fuller would have been less able to secure such a large number of commissions had he not taken advantage of

²⁵⁴ Julian Stallabrass, 'Success and Failure of Peter Fuller', *New Left Review*, 207 (1994), 87–102.

the fact that he had attended Cambridge University at the same time as Cork.²⁵⁵

Mulholland's comment regarding Fuller's Cambridge connection is exaggerated, but he is right to note to the evolution of the art press as a factor in the critic's development. Fuller's trajectory as a critic through the 1970s is not merely a question of disinterested shifting critical tendencies, but a journey through the shifting terrain of the press available to him as a writer, and the connections that enabled this. Read as a history of publications, as much as his own publication history, it is possible to see why Fuller understood the value of retrospective reinvention. Unlike his contemporaries Cork and Tisdall, Fuller did not find himself in the fortunate position of the staff newspaper critic, instead working as a freelance writer across a number of publications. (Cork recalls that he was paid £35 a week as critic of the *Evening Standard* – 'an absolute fortune'.²⁵⁶ Though this was no more than the average for non-manual workers in 1970. By the early 1980s and after a decade of inflation, Fuller was complaining to the director of the ICA that 'in order to keep "the Peter Fuller machine" going, I now need to bring in around £1,500 every month'.²⁵⁷) Instead, Fuller found himself developing his critical stance according to the market available for criticism. Yet, even in a culture in which an Oxbridge education opened doors, it was an other set of elite connections that helped Fuller establish his visibility as a critic in the first half of the 1970s.

By the time Fuller had settled in London in the late summer of 1968, he had begun working for a financial newspaper in the City of London, working on the property desk of the *City Press*. By the end of 1968 Fuller had begun filing exhibition reviews for *Arts Review*. A year later, Fuller had published the first issue of his own *Synthesis*, a magazine of art criticism and poetry with a distinctly countercultural flavour. In November 1969 Fuller filed the first of a series of columns (under the pseudonym Percy Ingrams) for the radical left newspaper *Black Dwarf*. The *Dwarf* had launched in May 1968, its editorial committee including among others the student activist Tariq Ali, the literary agent and left-wing activist Clive Goodwin and the CND activist and later feminist writer Sheila Rowbotham (see Ch. 2). For his 'City Dwarf' column, Fuller filed 'insider' reports from the front line of

²⁵⁵ Mulholland, 'The Fall and Rise of Crisis Criticism', p. 64.

²⁵⁶ Cork, 'Conversation with the Author'.

²⁵⁷ Peter Fuller, 'Letter to Bill MacAlister', 2 May 1983, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 955/8/208.

capitalism, excoriating the venality and excesses of City culture, though he made no appearance as a critic writing on art or other culture.

Through Goodwin in particular, *Black Dwarf* had links to the art world circles. Goodwin had been married to the young Pop artist Pauline Boty, who had died of cancer in 1966. Fuller clearly found himself in degrees of association to this milieu – his college friend (and *Synthesis* contributor) Robert Chenciner recalled their first flatshare in London:

After Cambridge Peter was as broke as the rest of us, and moved in to share our lavish free apartment at 10 Gloucester Gate Regents Park, underneath Adrian Berg's studio where David Hockney with Peter Schlesinger, and Patrick Procktor were often passing up and down the stairs.²⁵⁸

The mention of Hockney, Berg and Procktor suggests how the New Left of *Black Dwarf* intersected with the counterculture of the London commercial art world. An advert for the 'Black Dwarf Benefit Painting sale and Exhibition' in *Black Dwarf* in September 1970, at the Robert Self Gallery, advertises works by Hockney, Berg, Procktor, Jim Dine, Derek Boshier, R.B. Kitaj, Joe Tilson, Clive Barker, Caroline Coon, Allen Jones, Ralph Steadman and Richard Hamilton.²⁵⁹

The gallerist Robert Self had undoubtedly come across Fuller in 1969, since he had advertised his gallery in the first issue of Fuller's *Synthesis*, which also carried advertising for *City Press*.²⁶⁰ Fuller had penned an article on Procktor for *Synthesis*, and would later write to his uncle that he was 'also doing a certain amount of work for a young gallery owner, Robert Self'.²⁶¹

Fuller's enthusiasm for radical politics ran in parallel with a fascination with radical art. But political writing and writing about art were separate aspects of Fuller's early activity. While he could write anonymous attacks on the machinations of the financial establishment with an underlying hint of Christian morality, the issues of *Synthesis* suggested a fascination in the subjective forms of liberation at work in the counterculture.

²⁵⁸ Robert Chenciner, 'Introduction to Peter Fuller', *Www.artinfluence.com* <<http://archive.is/V2nGh>> [accessed 6 February 2016].

²⁵⁹ 'Advert for Black Dwarf Benefit Painting Sale and Exhibition', *Black Dwarf*, 5 September 1970.

²⁶⁰ See *Synthesis*, June 1969.

²⁶¹ Peter Fuller, 'Letter to George Fuller', 18 August 1970, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 9716/1.

Four issues of Synthesis

Synthesis, Fuller's editorial note in the first issue declared, 'offers more than is possible in a conventional magazine, or newspaper arts supplement'. 'We want to break down the tyranny of the closed, critical circles, and the facetious escapism of the underground Press, which in their different ways, are at present preventing the objective observer from seeing what is happening in the arts.'²⁶² In its four issues, *Synthesis* ran articles on contemporary artistic activity across art forms. Alongside an element of original poetry and fiction, *Synthesis* carried coverage of film, visual art, theatre, performance art and pop music.

Fuller's ambitious, if fledgling, editorial venture attempted to bring a form of critical commentary to respond to developments in the arts where the counterculture and the mainstream coincided. In one sense, it mimicked the multi-form 'arts lab' model that had emerged in arts venues during the 1960s, exemplified by the new ICA. But while *Synthesis* brought together commentary on different art forms, it also offers a snapshot of the way official and mainstream culture faced the encroachment of the counterculture, while the counterculture itself came under scrutiny.

Although the first issue was mostly given over to poetry, it also carried Fuller's article on Hockney, and an article criticising other critics' approaches to the work of René Magritte. The following two issues sought more sensational territory. Subtitled 'Destruction issue', issue two carried articles on the artists associated with Gustav Metzger's 'autodestructive art', filmmakers Lindsay Anderson and Jean-Luc Godard, playwright Edward Bond, the war photography of Don McCullin, and a review of Jeff Nuttall's book *Bomb Culture* (1968). *Synthesis*'s third issue shifted to more contested ground, taking as its focus the presence and presentation of gay culture in film, pop music, theatre and visual art, including Fuller's article on Procktor. Notably, the issue was attentive to the complicated relationship of 'straight' mainstream and counterculture to the gay scene, as well as paying particular attention to the role of the underground and small press in gay subculture – quoting correspondence critical of the underground newspaper *International Times*'s removal of its 'Males' correspondence ads for men in the face

²⁶² Peter Fuller, 'Editorial', *Synthesis*, June 1969, 3.

of police pressure, and carrying advertising for gay and lesbian publications. In its final issue, *Synthesis* returned to a survey approach, carrying articles on mime artist Adam Darius, the autobiography of occultist Aleister Crowley, the films of Luis Buñuel and Nuttall's performance art group 'The People Show'.

Synthesis is an unstable attempt to outline where art could connect with progressive developments in culture and society. There is little explicit politics in it. Rather the magazine attempts to represent a culture and society in crisis and in the throes of revolution and transition. To do so Fuller produced an unusual hybrid magazine, which adopted a conventional format of critical review while tapping into the artistic expressions of the counterculture and the economy of the small press which then subsisted: the idea of freedom and liberation to be found in *Synthesis* was in the breaking of sexual mores and social convention; it indulges an insistent interest in surrealist paintings with an emphatic eroticism, while the poetry is conscious of its own taboo-breaking. In its general outlook, it represents a combination of enthusiasm and impasse and the shift towards a critical disillusion with the more optimistic aspects of 1960s counterculture, and the increasing tension between social and psychological interpretations of oppression and liberation. As Fuller wrote in 'After Autodestruction', dismissing the autodestructive art of Metzger and his colleagues, 'Men like Lindsay Anderson, Bond, Goddard [sic], and Topor are the new generation of destructivists, who point towards the break down of the whole hierarchy, towards the crumbling of the foundations, and actively wish to precipitate that event', concluding that '[Edward] Bond may be right when he urges us to break. Out of the shattered heap of moralities, society and turgid traditions something will emerge... and before long a new generation of destructionists will be needed.'²⁶³

Synthesis folded with its fourth issue, published in late 1969.²⁶⁴ (Attentive to maintaining his profile, however, Fuller continued to declare himself editor of *Synthesis*, at least in the letters columns of *Studio International*.²⁶⁵) In November, Fuller has begun writing for *Black Dwarf*. This would also be a relatively short-term involvement. By March 1970, the paper's editorial board had split, and Ali and

²⁶³ Peter Fuller, 'After Autodestruction', *Synthesis*, July 1969, 4–5 (p. 5).

²⁶⁴ Apart from its first issue, dated June 1969, *Synthesis* does not give a publication date for each issue. However, some idea of the month of publication can be determined by the dates of exhibitions and plays advertised.

²⁶⁵ Peter Fuller, 'Correspondence: Makonde Sculpture', *Studio International*, March 1970, 89.

others formed a new paper, *Red Mole*. Fuller filed three more columns pseudonymously for 'City Mole', among these his only contribution on art, an attack on the art market and the commercial gallery system.

Fuller's article for *Red Mole* made a concise argument for the depredations of market capitalism in the production of art. Fuller discusses the effects of financial speculation, noting that the rise in the markets for contemporary painting and old masters had through the 60s far outrun the rising cost of living, and outperformed the stock market. And yet as a counterpoint to this inflation:

... more and more work that is being produced is "unsaleable". It is too large, or like the environmentalists, the Funk artists, the autodestructive painters, it rejects the concept of art as a precious object, and cannot be traded in the same way with the same appreciation potential as the flat surface painting, the permanent sculpture or the "object d'art" which provide the life-blood of the main selling galleries...²⁶⁶

'Percy Ingrams' soon disappeared from *Red Mole*. Fuller's *Red Mole* piece had been noticed by John Berger, who directed Paul Barker (editor of *New Society*) to it.²⁶⁷ Barker commissioned Fuller to write a similar piece for *New Society*, which appeared in July 1970. Here Fuller rehearsed his earlier arguments, but here noted the growing impact of the recurring currency crises that had marked the previous two years:

The art market has been hit by the international money shortage – perhaps even more than other markets, because, after an initial unloading by small investors to pay off overdrafts, and by the large, corporate investors to increase their liquidity at a time where there was a premium on ready cash, business simply dried up.²⁶⁸

Fuller took this as an opportunity to theorise that 'The change in the status of a work of art from object to experience is a crucial one, aesthetically, economically, politically and socially', arguing that this had led to a division in the art world, in which 'artists are battling to produce a new visual language, more appropriate and

²⁶⁶ Percy Ingrams, 'City Mole', *Red Mole*, 17 April 1970, p. 4 (unpaginated).

²⁶⁷ See Peter Fuller, 'Goodbye to All That!', *New Society*, 26 May 1988; repr. in Peter Fuller, *Seeing through Berger* (London: Claridge, 1988), pp. 89–96.

²⁶⁸ Peter Fuller, 'The End of Art', *New Society*, 9 July 1970, pp. 64–66 (p. 64).

adaptable to contemporary society.' 'The attempt,' Fuller declared, 'has necessary involved a rapid and absolute decline in the concept of "painterliness" and the creation of works which cannot conveniently be packaged, catalogued and sold as luxury consumer goods with a built-in investment potential.'²⁶⁹

Happy to echo the rhetoric of dematerialisation celebrated by Cork and Tisdall, but with a harder materialist and economic undertone, Fuller nevertheless equivocated, and it is interesting that it was on the ground of the role of state patronage that he made his case:

One may be inclined to welcome the emergence of new art forms which cannot be intimately linked to the existing commodity market in art... But as the private buyer diminishes ... the state and big industry are acquiring a real monopoly over creativity in the visual arts ... the emergence of a real avant-garde, intent on a social as well as an aesthetic revolution, does become a virtual impossibility.

At the moment, there appears to be no solution to this dilemma. Nor do the artists who invade the Arts Council, demanding increased patronage, or who solicit the assistance of industry, realise that they are substituting one form of tyranny for another.²⁷⁰

Fuller's more general commentaries for *New Society* contrasted with the subjective and emotionally overwrought focus of *Synthesis*, and the narrowly artist-centred reviews that Fuller contributed frequently to the 'trade' press of *Connoisseur*, *Arts Review* and *Art & Artists*. Yet reading those texts as a spectrum of a writer's interests and commitments, one can trace issues which preoccupied Fuller. These exemplify the problem of the critic's ambiguous role as supporter of new artistic activity, the problem of critical interpretation and the question of the legitimacy of subjective experience and reflection with regards to a public of readers.

²⁶⁹ Fuller, 'The End of Art', p. 66.

²⁷⁰ Fuller, 'The End of Art', p. 66. In describing 'artists who invade the Arts Council', Fuller was probably making reference to the confrontational public meetings that had occurred in 1969 between the Arts Council's New Activities Committee (NAC) and the 'Friends of the Arts Council Operative', a campaign group of artists protesting the Arts Council's lack of support of non-traditional activities in the visual arts. See John Hoyland, 'NAC Slays FACOP: British Artists and the State', *Black Dwarf*, 25 May 1970, p. 12.

As a freelance writer, Fuller was quick to exploit multiple venues to promote the same subject. A review of the Claes Oldenburg exhibition at the Tate in *Arts Review* was swiftly followed by a longer piece on the same show for *New Society* and a review in *Connoisseur*.²⁷¹ And though he would later disavow the state-patronised avant-garde as much as he would a moribund modernism, in his early writing Fuller was happy to side with the new developments then taking place in the smaller galleries and alternative venues, applying a similar journalistic economy across the outlets at his disposal. So Stuart Brisley's exhibition at the alternative Sigi Krauss Gallery - 'typical of the very best, most imaginative and genuinely revolutionary art which he has offered so far' - was reviewed enthusiastically in both *Connoisseur* and *Arts Review*.²⁷² 'Allen Jones succeeds in delivering a powerful blow straight into the conscious and sub-conscious mind,' Fuller opined of Jones's infamous show of fetish mannequins in 1970:

He has chosen material which is deliberately electric, riddled with man's most basic prejudices, passions, fantasies and desires. The consummate ease with which he masters and presents this them has genuinely extended the range of the fine art context.²⁷³

In *Connoisseur*, the accolade was similar:

Woman as commodity is an integral aspect of the McLuhan conscious media society. [Jones] is the first artist who has successfully extended the context of the fine arts far enough to deal with this theme, without resorting to the distorted glamour of individual personalities.²⁷⁴

Through this mercenary use of competing publications, Fuller quickly assembled a long publication list of reviews between 1970 and 1975. Although Fuller wrote reviews of a whole range of exhibitions of both historical and contemporary art, (in 1970 he filed over 70 reviews and articles between *Arts Review* and *Connoisseur*), it is still possible to examine where his interests were most directed. Unlike his contemporaries in the broadsheets, Fuller was not in the position to be selective, nor could command a captive readership, and instead pushed to write about

²⁷¹ Peter Fuller, 'You Mustn't Touch', *New Society*, 16 July 1970; Peter Fuller, 'Claes Oldenburg', *Arts Review*, 4 July 1970; Peter Fuller, 'Claes Oldenburg', *Connoisseur*, September 1970, 74-75.

²⁷² Peter Fuller, 'Sigi Krauss Gallery; Stuart Brisley', *Connoisseur*, December 1970, 301; Peter Fuller, 'Stuart Brisley: Sigi Krauss Gallery', *Arts Review*, 24 October 1970, 694.

²⁷³ Peter Fuller, 'Allen Jones', *Arts Review*, 31 January 1970, 46.

²⁷⁴ Peter Fuller, 'Allen Jones', *Connoisseur*, April 1970, p. 273.

certain artists and certain thematics. One of the more notable aspects of Fuller's early criticism is an interest in art that is engaged with the human body, gender and an element of psychosexual anxiety. To Fuller's enthusiasm for Brisley's often shocking performance works, one could add his attention to Allen Jones and Richard Lindner's sexually fetishistic Pop imagery. Nor was Fuller was not indifferent to sexual fantasy and psychic instability in historical art, writing about the female subject of Pre-Raphaelite painting who 'tantalises with her desirability, yet... remains aloof', provoking a 'virulent dialectic between ethereality and fleshy desire.'²⁷⁵ And of Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, Fuller would observe that:

... one of its central ideas concerns where the internal ends and the external begins. It is about 'subjective' and 'objective' realities... His entire output must be viewed as an attempt to validate his 'psychotic' position. The popularity of *The Scream* is determined by a universal crisis of identity.²⁷⁶

Motifs of bodily crises were never far away, especially when associated with the female form: reviewing an exhibition by textile artist Ewa Jaroszynska, Fuller would declare her 'a powerful, extraordinary artist. Her vision is of a world filled with bulbous anthropomorphic forms, broken and contorted like a landscape after a nuclear holocaust. Strange figures swell and recede bearing their amputation and exaggerations with a ghostly majesty.'²⁷⁷

Fuller's interest in the bodily subjects continued in his coverage of work by women artists, artists whose work turned to the female body as site and subject matter. Of these, Fuller gave continued coverage to Penelope Slinger, first reviewing her work in 1971, subsequently covering exhibitions in 1973 and 1974. In their mocking articulation of a fragmented and objectified female body, Slinger's assemblages and photocollages offered an attractive combination of politics and eroticism. For Fuller:

Penelope Slinger's work is significant because it consistently evades any superficial engagement with eroticism: it is a serious exploration of the nature of female sexuality, pursued by a woman... [Slinger's work] is pioneering and it parallels the writings of Juliet Mitchell and Kate Millett,

²⁷⁵ Peter Fuller, 'Pre-Raphaelitism', *Arts Review*, 7 November 1970, 721.

²⁷⁶ Peter Fuller, 'Edvard Munch', *Connoisseur*, March 1974, 246–246.

²⁷⁷ Peter Fuller, 'Jaroszynska', *Arts Review*, 6 June 1970, 359.

but what it has which they do not always, is an insistence of specifics. The price which Penelope Slinger pays for this is enormously high. Essentially, it is her own self which is dissected, analysed, and displayed to her audience.²⁷⁸

Fuller continued his enthusiasm for Slinger's work the following year in a four-page feature in *Connoisseur*. It is a remarkable contribution in the context of an otherwise arch-conservative publication geared primarily to the auction market for traditional fine art and antiques. Couched in terms of Berger's post-*Ways of Seeing* theorising about female visibility and sexuality, Fuller rehearsed what were becoming established feminist tropes regarding the psychology of patriarchal objectification in women, and the suppression of a self-directed female sexuality:

The idealisation of women in the western tradition consistently implies that the appearance a woman is compelled to manufacture for men is synonymous with her reality. But this, of course, is not so.

Penny Slinger is well aware of this dichotomy: there is an agency within her which surveys her own body. This becomes objectified when she has herself photographed, or photographs herself, in the process of making her images.²⁷⁹

This sensitivity to subjective and psychic vulnerability in Fuller's earlier writings might be understood as the combination of a number of influencing factors. Fuller was seeing a psychoanalyst during these years, and clearly took both a professional and personal interest in psychoanalytical theories and concepts. Fuller would have been well informed about debates in the women's liberation movement, as it was represented first in *Black Dwarf*, but more closely through the editorial context of *7 Days*, the short-lived left-wing photo-news weekly that ran from October 1971 to March 1972, and for which Fuller worked as the home news editor (see Ch.2). Financially backed by leading figures of the New Left, including Berger, *7 Days* attempted to move away from the sectarian conflict of *Black Dwarf* and *Red Mole*, to produce a populist outlet for a radical left perspective on current affairs. But to this it added a sustained attention to cultural politics, publishing articles on film, rock culture and visual art, bringing to these an emerging emphasis on semiotics and

²⁷⁸ Peter Fuller, 'Penelope Slinger: Opening', *Connoisseur*, September 1973, 72.

²⁷⁹ Peter Fuller, 'Penny Slinger', *Connoisseur*, 187 (1974), 104–7 (p. 104).

psychoanalysis; the paper would publish articles by, among others, Peter Wollen on the Surrealists, Mary Kelly on Frank Zappa, and Laura Mulvey on radical film.

Fuller's only substantial contribution to *7 Days* as an art critic was an article attacking the artist John Latham, and his organisation the Artist Placement Group (APG). Here, he stuck to the materialist-styled criticism he had aired in *Red Mole* airing an early misgiving regarding the function of the radical artist, notably out of step with his support for radical artists elsewhere:

APG is symptomatic of the crisis in the visual arts. Radical artists do not know what they should be doing. This is because painting and sculpture traditionally involved making physical objects, which had to be sold, like any commodity, through a commercial market.

...But not all experiments abandoning the commercial premise were as progressive as the artists who engaged in them liked to think. The eco-artists, who dyed Grand Canals green, or wrapped up miles of beach in polythene, the conceptualists, who treated art as an investigatory process, and the environmentalists, who tried to work with whole spaces rather than autonomous objects, quickly found that their ideas were even more limited and elitist than the "things" which has preceded them.²⁸⁰

There is an element of cant in Fuller's general rhetoric against radical art, given his continued support for artists who could be deemed radical. Reviewing Cork's *Critic's Choice* exhibition in 1973 Fuller could declare that 'the work of [John] Hilliard, [Bob] Law, [Richard] Long and [Gerard] Newman has persistently impressed me as ultimately being among the most radical, challenging, intelligent and purposefully demanding work currently being made in Britain', though he still used the opportunity to round on Latham and John Stezaker: 'if one becomes closely involved with the context and premises of their work ... one is left, in the end, with elaborate obsessional mechanisms which feed off themselves and nothing else.'²⁸¹

Yet still Fuller persisted in his support of radical artistic developments – as long as they conformed to a minimum criteria of political alignment – favourably reviewing

²⁸⁰ Peter Fuller, 'What's a Poor Artist to Do?', *7 Days*, 8 December 1971, p. 21.

²⁸¹ Peter Fuller, 'Critic's Choice: Arthur Tooth & Sons, London', *Connoisseur*, May 1973, 74.

Conrad Atkinson's social documentary exhibition *Work, Wages and Profits*, and Victor Burgin's exhibition at the Lisson gallery.²⁸² In parallel, other texts were preoccupied with psychological issues: a review of works by John Altoon finds in the artist's imagery 'a fear of separation from the genitals, or castration' while in a review of a book on Egon Schiele's period in jail for pornography offenses, Fuller discusses over the artist's sexual tendencies and obsessions.²⁸³

Fuller would soon renege on his earlier acquaintances and commitments. But before accepting the established reading of Fuller's 'turn to the right', it is worth comparing the orientation of his early art criticism, attendant as it was to the specifics of particular artists' practice, with the more general critical claims which Fuller would publish towards the end of the 1970s, and through which he deliberately distanced himself from the commitments he had made in his writing before 1975. The development of Fuller's rejection of new artistic tendencies is a complicated combination of changing critical and material pressures. At its core is a growing acknowledgement of the limitations of both the commercial and public institutional contexts that sustained contemporary artistic practice, which had much to do with the stagnation of the commercial market for contemporary art by the mid-1970s (and its not incidental effect on the art press), in tandem with the expanding presence of public patronage in the support of contemporary activity. Fuller's more substantial critical statements between 1976 and 1978 are useful indicators of his changing perspective.

In a 1978 lecture later published as *Fine Art after Modernism*, Fuller makes a materialist analysis of the establishment of the nineteenth-century 'professional fine art tradition', and its emergence as an aspect of individualist bourgeois capitalism. This tradition, Fuller argues, is superseded and made redundant by the development of 'monopoly' capitalism, whose attendant visual genre – what Fuller refers to as the 'mega-visual tradition' – was no longer located in the conventions and economies of painting and sculpture, but had shifted to the mass reproduced forms of advertising. The culture of image-making migrates, from one to the other, leaving the fine artist abandoned in an increasingly anachronistic and irrelevant institutional enclave. Modernism announces the final attempt to retain the special

²⁸² Peter Fuller, 'Conrad Atkinson: Work, Wages and Prices', *Arts Review*, April 1974, 203; Peter Fuller, 'Victor Burgin', *Arts Review*, 14 June 1974.

²⁸³ Peter Fuller, 'John Altoon', *Connoisseur*, June 1973, 158; Peter Fuller, 'Egon Schiele', *Connoisseur*, July 1974.

status of 'Art', through the process of 'self-emptying' of modernist formalism. But a key element of Fuller's critique was the role of the state, and in the post-war context, the welfare state:

For just at the moment when the professional fine art tradition in Britain seemed destined to go the way of manuscript illumination, *politics* stepped in to save it. Although, unlike the CIA, MI5 did not choose to promote modernism throughout the world as a cultural instrument in the Cold War, the post-war Welfare State became heavily involved in the patronage of it.²⁸⁴

It is on the basis of this condition of patronage that Fuller would conflate both the problem of modernist avant-garde of the post-war with the alternative practices that had begun to contest it at the end of the 60s and into the early 70s. It was the state's sponsorship that 'commissioned nothing and imposed no constraints' that turned out to be the source of the activities that had characterised the earlier half of the decade:

The injection of money into the Fine Art tradition on what has come to be called the 'hands-off', or totally unconditional basis, has proved an unmitigated failure. Far from producing the new Golden Age, the splendid efflorescence envisaged in the Keynesian dream, it has ushered in an unparalleled decadence. Piles of bricks, folded blankets, soiled nappies, grey monochromes, and what have you, can hardly demonstrate to those nasty Russians, or to any one else for that matter, the creative power with which 'freedom' invests our artists in the West.²⁸⁵

This totalitarian view of patronage may have been exaggerated, but it nevertheless reflected the significance that state and public patronage had acquired in the visual arts by the middle of the 1970s. According to Fuller, artists could be likened to American Indians on a reservation, or the inmates of an asylum:

As people on reservations are wont to do, many committed incest: i.e. they did nothing but produce paintings about paintings... Others of course went insane, and, abandoning their 'traditional' crafts altogether, raced round the reservation tearing off their clothes, gathering leaves and twigs, sitting in

²⁸⁴ Peter Fuller, 'Fine Art after Modernism', in *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), pp. 44–67 (p. 60).

²⁸⁵ Fuller, 'Fine Art after Modernism', p. 60.

baths of bull's blood, getting drunk, walking about with rods on their heads, insisting that their excrement, or sanitary towels, were 'Art' – either with or without the capital 'A'.²⁸⁶

Fuller sneering catalogue of artistic practices he now judged beyond the pale was that of the art of the earlier 70s which he had, in many cases, helped support. The performances of Stuart Brisley, the feminism of Mary Kelley's *Post-Partum Document* that Fuller had anticipated in the work of Judy Clark and Penelope Slinger, the anti-monumental sculptural work of Barry Flanagan – all of these he now condemned as the products of a culture of state patronage that demanded nothing in return.

Fuller's characterisation of the state's role in the promotion of new artistic currents rewrites history, since the role of non-state, commercial and semi-commercial galleries in supporting such work in the early 1970s is evident even from his own publication record. But then it can be argued that the split attention of Fuller's criticism was conditioned by the availability of editorial venues and their distinct demands. In this, the commercial fortunes of art publishing has a part to play. By the middle of 1975, Fuller's writing for *Arts Review* tails off, and he reappears in the pages of *New Society*, though continuing to write for the monthly *Connoisseur*. With the start of 1976, Fuller began to contribute to *Studio International*, now edited by Cork, who had taken over as editor from Peter Townsend the previous summer. 1976 was a pivotal year for the British art magazines, seeing the appearance of *Artscribe* and later Townsend's and Jack Wendler's *Art Monthly*; by this point *Studio* had started its period of decline, switching to bimonthly publication at the beginning of 1975, while *Arts Review* saw a marked decline in its advertising from 1974 onwards,²⁸⁷ and it is likely that Fuller's disappearance was related as much to shrinking editorial budgets as his own change of direction.

Fuller's writing, which had attempted to make sense the particularities of artistic practice and the condition of subjectivity and spectatorship, now turned further towards the generalising political, economic and institutional criticism of the art world he had trialled in the radical press years earlier. Part of that shift involved

²⁸⁶ Fuller, 'Fine Art after Modernism', p. 61.

²⁸⁷ Based on an evaluation of the total annual pagination of the magazine for each year; *Arts Review*'s pagination peaked in 1973, at 896 pages, declining to a low of 716 pages by 1978

turning on his previous patrons in the art press, in a vituperative attack on the 'trade' art magazines. In May 1976, writing in *New Society*, Fuller sniffed that:

Many writers who contribute to the commercial arts magazines, and who also wish to practise serious criticism, feel like botanical scientists trying to get research papers into seed merchants catalogues.²⁸⁸

Here the target was the relationship of art criticism to the moneyed elite whose advertising sustained the art magazines. *Connoisseur* was described as 'two wadges of advertising, between which a delicate filling of editorial ham has been tastefully inserted', while in *Arts Review*, 'the criticism in which is rarely above sixth form level'. Of his extensive contribution to both titles, Fuller remained silent.²⁸⁹

Fuller's prognosis sought to disentangle criticism from both the special interests of the rich and the sectarian fragmentation of the avant-garde:

[We] no longer live in a historical moment in which, even in a limited sense, any one tendency clearly points towards ways of seeing which will become those of the future... In such a situation, a rigorous critical magazine, unallied to any of the decadent, squabbling avant-gardist groupings, and entirely uncontaminated by the corrupting pressures of the art market, becomes more necessary than ever.²⁹⁰

Fuller pursued the theme in a longer piece in *Studio International* in October, an issue devoted entirely to discussions of the art press and art criticism. There, Fuller argued for 'a magazine which *in fact* rejects any dependency on the market in art', and quoted the editorial statement of the recently launched American journal *October*, in which the new editorial group committed itself to "the renewal and strengthening of critical discourse through intensive review of the methodological options now open."²⁹¹

To escape the dependency on both the market and on the avant-garde meant looking to an 'outside' of the art world for support. Fuller's text is appropriately titled 'Clearing a Space for Criticism' and what emerges from Fuller's argument is an acute sense of lines of differentiation, between artistic and linguistic practice,

²⁸⁸ Peter Fuller, 'The Art Magazines', *New Society*, 6 May 1976, pp. 307-8 (p. 307).

²⁸⁹ Fuller, 'The Art Magazines', p. 307.

²⁹⁰ Fuller, 'The Art Magazines', p. 308.

²⁹¹ Peter Fuller, 'Clearing a Space for Criticism', *Studio International*, 193 (1976), 119-25 (p. 120).

between artists and the public, and between the interested (professional, institutional) art world, and the disinterested (that is, not implicated in art-buying) general public. These divisions would be mediated by an as-yet unrealised magazine:

As a question of policy, it would reassert the distinction between the production of art, and the practice of criticism. Contemporary 'avant-gardism' has promoted the idea that criticism ought to be displaced, either by 'documentation', or by a critical art practice.

... Criticism *can* mediate between a work and its public, transform the way in which it is seen, and by thus changing the relations of viewers to it, play a part in constituting the meanings of that work within the social world.

Here, a larger public is invoked to restore balance to the power of the elite enclave of both the commercial gallery system and the system of liberal state patronage over public life. In his appeal to the public as that which would give legitimacy to a renewed form of independent criticism, Fuller would point to the mass interest in the major exhibitions of British art history that had recently been staged (of Turner, Constable and English Landscape). Criticism would be in the interests of the culture of the whole, forming and directing the public understanding of art in society.

There is an important harking-back in Fuller's article to the high point of the art critic as a public intellectual – he cites Clive Bell, Herbert Read, Kenneth Clark, Clement Greenberg and of course Berger as examples, critics who appeared for a time to have command of a general public's understanding of modern art. But it is on this point that it is worth reflecting on the way in which the question of the public could be constituted in the late 1970s. At stake was the breakdown of the liberal paternalism that had characterised the political slant of cultural policy of the previous decade. Richard Cork, in his 1979 preface to a collection of his *Evening Standard* articles (Cork had resigned as the *Standard's* art critic in March 1975) could continue his benign defence of the public good of artistic provision by the state as a correction to the market:

A visual sensibility has to be nurtured by constant exposure to the best original examples of art that can be found, and how can such awareness

grow in the first place if the works themselves simply do not exist within a normal context?²⁹²

But the patronage of the liberal state could not, by 1978, be put back together. The politics of cultural consensus that had supported the public subsidy of experimental art had unravelled. Yet the ideal of the role of public criticism shaping public culture still exercised these Cambridge-bred critics. An appeal to the public could no longer be driven by the assumption of the legitimacy of patrician cultural leadership. Having experienced the evolution of the radical left, Fuller was no immediate friend of the state or the ruling class. To constitute a public outside of the mechanisms of the market or the state, however, still required some common denominator. In 'Clearing a Space for Criticism' Fuller argues that formalist criticism was tied to the growth of the art market, yet:

In Britain, there was no parallel explosion of a domestic market in contemporary art supported by private buyers... One effect of this was that no comparable, indigenous theories arose to dominance here.²⁹³

The use of the term 'indigenous' suggests a writer conversant with a Marxist discussion of national capitalisms, but also of the notion of a national culture. In his concluding remarks Fuller makes an interesting equivocation:

... A people or a class which is cut off from its own past is far less free to choose and to act as a people or a class than one that has been able to situate itself in history.

To talk of *a people or a class* suggests Fuller's uncertainty about the constituency of his wished-for public, one in which the 'working class' might no longer be the subject of address, but who, as a critic still attempting to hold to his left-wing associations, could not simply be dismissed. But what it also suggests is the fading of two separate previous 'publics' – on one hand the disappearance of the British tradition of top-down, elite cultural paternalism, and on the other the stalling of the radical counterculture and left militancy that had erupted in the years directly following the summer of 1968. In the face of these two polarities, between the institutions of official culture, permanence and tradition on one side, and the spontaneous, fast-evolving yet fragmenting energies and formations of cultural

²⁹² Richard Cork, 'Art and Capitalism', in *The Social Role of Art: Essays in Criticism for a Newspaper Public* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1979), pp. 1–3 (p. 2).

²⁹³ Fuller, 'Clearing a Space for Criticism', p. 123.

radicalism on the other, there was left a third position – populism. Looking for a subject for his criticism, Fuller would turn to a more inchoate audience, the ‘indigenous’ public, no longer a revolutionary force or constituency, but one brought together not around projections of a possible futures ways of being, but through an aestheticized version of national history unhinged from any real social constituency, yet seeking some stable point of reference in a period marked by social and cultural instability.

Subjectivity and political change could not be disentangled. Fuller repetitively employs the phrase ‘moments of becoming’ in these years, declaring that:

Radical criticism has no choice but to take its standards from the future, and to support and defend those ‘moments of becoming’ in an artist’s work through which he offers glimpse, however momentary of the possibilities of those modes of perception which will prevail when the sense have been emancipated...²⁹⁴

Yet the future which Fuller had seen opening up in the art and politics of the turn of the 70s, one which suggested a revolution in subjectivity as well as a revolution in society, had gone into retreat. The sense of psychological fragmentation and crisis that characterised Fuller’s *Synthesis*, and much of his early magazine criticism, can be read as the convergence of the writer’s own psychological and emotional troubles with a cultural atmosphere sensitive to the antagonisms of normative versus radicalised subjectivity. Such thematics were current in the underground and left press of the early 1970s, and this milieu constituted the ‘public’ that Fuller would have identified with. But by the mid-1970s the underground and left press had imploded, while the art magazines were struggling with the effects of a dwindling market.

Fuller’s subsequent shift to the question of the public sphere and criticism’s role in winning a public to a progressive left agenda did not survive the 1970s. Fuller would soon become a champion of craft, painting and sculpture, and the idea of artistic tradition, conceived as form of resistance to both the depredations of monopoly capitalism on one hand, and those ‘left-wing’ theories (marked by the influence of semiotics, psychoanalysis and feminism) which, as he saw it, undermined the notion of the active, centred and coherent human subject. His

²⁹⁴ Fuller, ‘Clearing a Space for Criticism’, p. 120.

route to this was through a rediscovery of the value of human expressivity to be found in the tactile transformation of the formal medium, one resistant to the technologically produced images of the 'mega-visual tradition'. The centred, self-creating sensuality involved in the making of artworks became a virtue. By 1980, Fuller would argue that:

... in its very sensuality, oil painting helped initiate an unprecedented form of imaginative, creative, yet thoroughly secular art which (though initiated by the bourgeoisie) represents a genuine advance in the cultural structuring of feeling and expressive potentiality.²⁹⁵

Fuller's 'turn to the right' appears then more as an attempt to retrieve some stable base from which to account for the subjective experience of art, one which implied the humanist virtue of an active subject, rather than one assailed by the products of the 'mega-visual tradition' or undermined by theories of subjectivity which gave little credence to the subject's autonomy. Along the way, Fuller would abandon the radical left of the art world, to turn his attention to a public that might share his own desires for a sense of stability and enduring value. Unwilling to see art as a form of activism or critical intervention, and disabused of the theoretical approaches to art that had gained ground in the art world of the late 70s, Fuller turned to the role of the critic as interlocutor of a broader, if less tangible public, turning his back on the advocacy of marginal artistic culture, and the moment of revolt out of which both it and he emerged.

'What is it all about? Well, I suspect that it's partly about the current derangement of our sense of history. "Once history ceased to be seen in linear terms," Jerry muses, "it ceased to be made in linear terms." The world may truly be breaking up, and our sense of that disintegration may be reflected in our cultivation of nostalgia, in the way that fashion cannibalises the past, in our hysterical traffic with futures and futurology.'

²⁹⁵ Fuller, *Seeing Berger: A Revaluation of Ways of Seeing*, p. 16.

– Edward Blishen, book review of Michael Moorcock's *The Lives and Times of Jerry Cornelius*²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ Edward Blishen, 'Her(o)maphrodite', *New Society*, 8 April 1975, p. 92.

Chapter 4

Young Conservatives: from *ONE* to *Artscribe*, 1973–1976

-But what about the spiritualism attached to it?

*-Well, I don't really like that. I don't really understand all that. You have to be Jewish to understand. I'm an Anglo-Saxon. I'm a middle-class Anglo-Saxon*²⁹⁷

The first issue of *ONE* magazine appeared in October 1973. If the masthead stood out, on the shelves of WH Smiths, it might have been because the three letters of the magazine's title, in capitals, were rendered in a typeface which mimicked three-dimensional solidity, projecting forward from the blank whiteness of the cover's background – the face of each letter in bright yellow. This three-dimensional font was repeated in the issue number itself, which stood out from the oval face of *ONE*'s 'O'.

The formal and the material were, after all, what *ONE* was about. The cover of the first issue declares some of the contents which follow: two critical appraisals of the Hayward Gallery's big historical exhibition that year, *Pioneers of Modern Sculpture*, and a reproduction of a work by the English constructivist Kenneth Martin, who discusses the history and rationale of his work in the issue. Martin's *Chance and Order 12 (Black)* (1973), presents a complex assembly of interlocking parallel lines, which teeter between ordering principles of chance and intention. A work that is the product of an ulterior explaining principle, *Chance and Order 12* was a fitting emblem for a magazine that sought to retrieve a principle of order out of what it perceived to be the increasingly incoherent relationship between art and criticism.

ONE played a peculiar role in the shifting landscape of British art magazines in the mid-1970s: emerging out of a particular milieu of practicing artists whose reputations were largely established by the interaction of the commercial art world and the art colleges of London in the 1960s, *ONE* was a small, early reaction to the shift of attention towards conceptualist and post-minimalist art that began to

²⁹⁷ Barry Martin, 'Jeremy Moon, 29th October 1973: Interview with Barry Martin', *ONE*, April 1974, pp. 3–9.

gather momentum in the years between 1970 and 1972. Rather than addressing these developments explicitly, however, *ONE* operated as a mouthpiece for artistic currents and constituencies that, having enjoyed a level of institutional success and critical attention during the 1960s, found themselves competing for critical attention against the novel forms of activity coming out of conceptualism and the counterculture.

Reacting to the shift in attention towards new artistic currents in the pages of the influential *Studio International*, as well as the more polemical positions adopted by prominent young newspaper critics such as Richard Cork and Caroline Tisdall, *ONE* provided a venue for the discussion of painting and sculpture at a moment when criticism was beginning to mount against what was seen as exhausted and compromised forms of modernist practice. *ONE*, running from 1973 to early 1975, is historically interesting as it operates as a precursor to the medium-specific, anti-conceptualist concerns of the later *Artscribe*, whose first issue was published in January 1976. Through the various personal connections and affiliations that contributed to *ONE*, its editor, artist Barry Martin, came into contact with the artists who would establish *Artscribe*. As a particularly concentrated expression of the defence of the object-based practices of painting and sculpture, *ONE* reacted to the turn away from the dominant modernist forms of art in the pages of *Studio*, as that magazine's editorial position endorsed more visibly the alternative practices that had started to claim attention from around 1969. As this chapter sets out, *ONE*'s attempt to create a separate platform could only preserve earlier critical concerns without being able or interested in developing them. But the magazine nevertheless functioned as a point of reference for a community of artists still committed to artistic practice understood as grounded in the evaluation of visual form; a perspective which *Artscribe* would more successful in continuing, although only through a turn to a more subjective model of critical value.

ONE was the outcome of a conversation between two artists, the sculptor and painter Barry Martin and the sculptor and critic William Tucker. Martin, eight years younger than Tucker, had studied at Goldsmiths College between 1961 and 1966, and had come into contact with Tucker and Kenneth Martin, before going on to study at St Martins College the following year, at a moment when the college's reputation for sculpture – with Anthony Caro on the staff and in the wake of the 'New Generation' sculptors he inspired – was at its height. Returning to Goldsmiths College's fine art department, this time as a tutor, in 1967, Martin found himself in

easy contact with two influential strands of English artistic practice and criticism – ‘St Martins’ sculpture and the formalism supported by Goldsmiths’ then head of painting, the painter and critic Andrew Forge (who was also on the editorial board of *Studio*). By the early 70s, Tucker was established as a sculptor while writing regular criticism on the subject of sculpture, notably through a series of essays published in *Studio International*, in which the artist debated the predicament, as he saw it, of late modernist sculpture.²⁹⁸

Running over six issues from October 1973 to May 1975, *ONE* appears as an early reaction to the complicated and often contradictory changes taking place in the British art world of the early 1970s, and it typifies the conflicts of this particular juncture, a moment in which the relationship between artists, the producers of art criticism and a wider art ‘establishment’, was thrown into energetic confusion by a combination of factors: by the fallout from the unravelling of the British art market boom of the 1960s; by the atrophy of the formalist critical tradition which had dominated criticism until the end of the 60s; and the problems encountered by the ‘official’ art establishment, principally represented by the Arts Council, in attempting to accommodate the competing demands of artistic groups and cliques that where often in direct conflict with each other. All these problems also point to the uncertain status of British art in a rapidly changing international scene, and the defensive perception that the field of art was being usurped by partisan critics in positions of power, as well as interests from abroad.

So in *ONE*’s first issue, Martin’s ‘editor’s note’ explained the rationale for the new magazine:

It is hoped that this art magazine will be seen for what it is, namely a search for truth in these complicated and commercial times.

²⁹⁸ See for example in this period, William Tucker, ‘An Essay on Sculpture’, *Studio International*, January 1969, 12–13; William Tucker, ‘Four Sculptors, Part 1: Brancusi’, *Studio International*, April 1970, 156–61; William Tucker, ‘Four Sculptors Part 2: Picasso Cubist Constructions’, *Studio International*, May 1970, 201–5 (p. 2); William Tucker, ‘Four Sculptors Part 3: Matisse’, *Studio International*, September 1970, 82–87; William Tucker, ‘Four Sculptors Part 4: David Smith’, *Studio International*, January 1971, 24–29; William Tucker, ‘Rodin: The Language of Sculpture 1’, *Studio International*, December 1972, 222–25; William Tucker, ‘Rodin: The Language of Sculpture 2’, *Studio International*, January 1973, 38–40; William Tucker, ‘Gravity, Rodin, Degas’, *Studio International*, August 1973, 24–29; William Tucker, ‘What Sculpture Is, Parts 1&2’, *Studio International*, December 1974, 232–34.

... part of the reason underlying its formation is the dissatisfaction in the compromise that many artists find themselves in. A compromise that is carried through most, if not all of the available vehicles of expression open to the urban dweller.

In particular, it has been noticed that most art literature, both current and past has been written by ill-informed critics without insight or vision in their purported profession.

This is amply demonstrated in their inability to write constructively about the recently produced art work. To do this the viewer-come-critic has to have his senses adequately 'tuned' to the occasion. He has to 'feel' the work and he cannot as so many critics do, rely on an art history course to interpret the new work for him.

The critic's understanding of the artist's work is important. It is their job to impart knowledge to a wider audience and make us aware of values above and beyond those material and commercial ones peddled at present.²⁹⁹

The tone was both defensive and accusatory, and these stakes – 'a search for truth' – were suitably high, not to say histrionic. But one can nevertheless identify a particular constellation of concerns: that there was a problem with critics and criticism, as both a type of professional and as a cultural practice; that there was a problem with the intellectual framework for criticism; that 'art history courses' could not act as substitutes for a practice of interpretation; and that while the experience of art was in some way to do with the subjective – the senses and feeling – it was nevertheless something that required mediation, a responsibility that was itself social, given its orientation to a notional 'wider audience'.

The art that was being neglected in this instance, was a particular set of formal traditions that had enjoyed some status throughout the preceding decade. *ONE*'s definition of good art was narrow: tightly restricted to the mediums of painting and sculpture, *ONE* was as partisan as the little grouping of individuals that constituted its main focus. If little groupings and cliques are the constituent form of the divisions in the British art world in the 1970s, then *ONE* effectively separated out one of these micro-communities and provided a platform for the articulation of its concerns. A survey of the artists represented in *ONE* offers a snapshot of a

²⁹⁹ Barry Martin, 'Editor's Note', *ONE*, October 1973, p. 2.

peculiarly English grouping and sub-grouping of artists, some closely associated with 'St Martins sculpture' or with the English Constructionist artists and the 'Systems' group,³⁰⁰ with others drawn from the 'middle generation' of English painters: among these Kenneth Martin, William Tucker, William Turnbull, Philip King, Jeremy Moon, Ian Stephenson, Roger Hilton, John Hoyland and Anthony Hill. All of them men – although this was hardly unusual in an art world which, however apparently radical or conservative, was still the mostly the preserve of men.

Underpinning *ONE's* agenda was William Tucker's protracted campaign to confront what he saw as a failure of criticism to perpetuate and extend an understanding of the achievements of twentieth century modernist art, and modernist sculpture in particular. Between 1969 and 1975, Tucker published a series of articles on what he saw as the lineage of modernist sculpture from Rodin, through Picasso and Brancusi to David Smith, primarily in the pages of *Studio International*. For Tucker, sculpture was threatened by two contradictory, yet internal developments: the first was sculpture's increasing identity with everyday things and materials; the second was the freeing of modernist sculpture from any requirement that it maintain a public character, and therefore a social role.

The two issues were intimately intertwined in the discussions about the role and purpose of artistic practice and of the artwork at the end of the 1960s. So in the January 1969 issue of *Studio*, in the article 'An Essay on Sculpture', Tucker reflected that 'In effect sculpture has become part of the world of artifacts which we inhabit, marked off only by the stated intention of the artist and the context in which the work is seen.'³⁰¹ Nevertheless, this stated intention involved an understanding of sculpture's complex separateness from other things; Tucker's essay shifts restlessly around the problem of its internal sufficiency and its external irrelevance: from Rodin, Tucker argued, sculptors realized the possibility of the fragment and the part, while Brancusi 'developed ...objects which were absolute, discrete from the world.' And if sculptors learnt from the Cubist painters that 'sculpture could be made from anything, about anything,' the sculpture of the 60s 'could be an object among objects, privileged only by its unique configuration, its lack of recognized

³⁰⁰ Formed in 1969 by Jeffrey Steele and Malcolm Hughes, the Systems Group assembled artists interested in mathematical, iterative and rules-based approaches to geometric abstract art. The group was the subject of a substantial Arts Council-organised touring exhibition, whose first version opened at the Whitechapel Gallery in March 1972, touring to ten venues until May 1973.

³⁰¹ Tucker, 'An Essay on Sculpture'.

type or function.' 'Its unity would be its own, not that given by an existing model in reality.'³⁰²

For Tucker, the problem was that such a sculpture 'was public, but its content was private'. And yet, conversely, 'society had not asked for it and there was no place for it, except in the non-world of galleries, museums and circulating exhibitions.' What was at stake, in effect, was a conflict between the freedoms of artists and their increasing estrangement from a public realm. There was, Tucker pessimistically concluded, 'no public realm in our time to which a public sculpture might give visual purpose.'³⁰³

Tucker's downbeat article appeared in an special focus on 'Some aspects of contemporary British sculpture', which surveyed the influence of Caro's St. Martins 'New Generation', while attempting to discover what changes were taking place, even if this meant focusing on younger artists still closely connected to the St Martins context. The issue contained a long essay by Charles Harrison, which, while paying the requisite homage to the achievements of the New Generation sculptors, nevertheless began to undermine, albeit cautiously, some of the critical claims that underpinned the reputation of New Generation work. Detecting the rift that was opening up between older and younger St Martins alumni (primarily represented by Richard Long and Barry Flanagan), Harrison was ready to assert that 'the aspect of Caro's and of the New Generation's sculpture which has been most vulnerable to questioning has been its object quality.'³⁰⁴

The growing prioritization of new artistic currents in *Studio*, in the years after 1969, especially by its increasing coverage and discussion of conceptual art and the publication of Joseph Kosuth's essay *Art after Philosophy*, rang alarm bells for artists like Tucker. By the beginning of 1971 he turned on *Studio International* in the pages of the Guardian:

Studio International, the only journal with any serious pretensions, has had a few good moments, but the art magazine is essentially a publicity organ for art: and there has been an increasing tendency among some artists to use the magazine itself as an area for the presentation of their work, as a

³⁰² Tucker, 'An Essay on Sculpture'.

³⁰³ Tucker, 'An Essay on Sculpture'.

³⁰⁴ Harrison, 'Some Recent Sculpture in Britain'.

surrogate gallery – indeed, the work often has no substantial existence outside the magazine.

It is a gift to the magazine critic: he is absolved from the tiresome duty of looking at, describing, or evaluating the work. All he has to do is to introduce it and his contribution, in the context, is presumably as deserving of an aesthetic response as the art. It looks to me like the final victory of the literary culture, with the critic acting the artist, and the artist happily filling in as the critic. Art and criticism are alike devalued.³⁰⁵

Nevertheless, Tucker concluded that:

If there is good art being produced in this country, and I believe there is, in spite of everything, it is because a few artists are not only doing their own work, but in addition supplying the context of informal debate in which it can have meaning.

But this is not the artist's business, and in the end must drain off his resources. Never was good professional criticism been more necessary: never has its absence been more apparent.

In a sense, of course, Tucker was having to provide his own context, and the dispute over the responsibilities of criticism can be read as part of the dislodging of a particular critical tradition by artistic practices that had decided to abolish the distinction between artistic work and critical work.

But Tucker's remark that artists 'were supplying the context of informed debate' also points to the professional characteristics of the writer of art criticism at the time, in magazines such as *Studio International*. The practicing artist-as-critic is a familiar trope of the period, and exists alongside the professional critic who has roots in a practical artistic training. Tucker was a sculptor writing about sculpture, the painter Patrick Heron was well-known for his often vitriolic exchanges on the relationship between American and British abstraction, while Andrew Forge – professionally involved in teaching at Goldsmiths College and sitting on the editorial advisory committee of *Studio* – was himself a practicing painter.

³⁰⁵ William Tucker, 'The Critic Accepts His Marginal Status, and Even the Mutilation of His Copy...', *The Guardian*, 2 June 1971, p. 8.

Forge had attempted a riposte to 'concept art' in *Studio* earlier that year. In 'Forces against object-based art', Forge intimated an existential crisis in culture which manifested itself as two problems apparent in the new attitudes towards art – on one side the tendency to place generalisations and metaphysical definitions of 'art' ahead of the contingency of the encounter with the work itself; and on the other, the desire to dissolve what distinguished the work of art from the rest of reality. Maintaining this ability to distinguish appears in Forge's argument as a question of societal or even civilizational ethics; 'The confrontation is not, as hitherto, between an old set of rules and a new set, but between an old set and no rules at all,' argued Forge, continuing that:

What characterizes the new is rather its projection of 'artistic freedom' into the public domain. Art is no longer the mediator between public and private life, a culturally agreed area where anything can be expressed, but is diffused through the community as therapy, in a mode of unbounded self-realisation.³⁰⁶

Criticism, for Forge, bore some of the blame for this dissolution, inasmuch as its speculations had tended to become ossified and repetitive; 'an incredible smoke screen has been wrapped round art, a cocoon of 'values' that thickens almost visibly. Meaning has become institutionalized.'³⁰⁷ And it was this ossification which bore some responsibility for the rejection of the traditions of art by the new radicalism, which itself nevertheless succumbed to the facile closure of generalizing and schematizing definitions. Referring to a statement by Daniel Buren, in which the artist railed against the way in which art predetermined one's view of reality,³⁰⁸ Forge could find the perfect expression to the resentment of the 'anti-art left'.

Brainwashed by criticism, utterly conditioned in their relationship to pictures, no wonder they cry 'Smash the museums! Smash the system!' The pathetic thing is that they see things in the same light as their adversaries.

³⁰⁶ Forge, 'Forces against Object-Based Art', p. 34.

³⁰⁷ Forge, 'Forces against Object-Based Art', p. 35.

³⁰⁸ 'It was thus that after having seen Cézanne, I became One of those mental prisoners who believes they see Mont St Victoire ... Art twists things; it stops you seeing things as they are.' cited in Jean Cassou, *Art and Confrontation: France and the Arts in an Age of Change* (London: Studio Vista, 1970).

Both the art-sick left and the art-fat right see art as identical with its apparatus.³⁰⁹

What is notable here is the recognition that both conservative, ingrained habits of criticism and politically dogmatic, reductive interpretations of art endanger the possibility of a productive or open exchange with an artwork. Against the depredations of both the 'monolithic structure that historicist criticism has foisted', and the 'art-sick' left's reduction of the artwork to art's 'apparatus',³¹⁰ Forge attempted to describe an authentic criticism with its roots firmly in an original encounter between work and response:

I dream of a criticism which is based on looking and is almost entirely descriptive. It would take as its starting point the fact that painting and writing, looking and reading, are two distinct modes, and it would continually return to this point. Its standards would not be drawn from some bird's-eye view of contemporary history (although it would be informative), but from the quality of the writer's encounter with the work and the problem of writing about it. ³¹¹

Criticism, then, was to be thought of as the product of a local encounter between work and subject. This was also, of course, a particular kind of subject, the subject of the practicing artist. Dogmatic criticism, by contrast, was the enemy, imposing external agendas and generalizing schema that ruled out the possibility of this encounter. This relationship was, unsurprisingly, symmetrical with the distancing of the professionalized art critic from the context of art-making, made more acute by the loss of shared terms of reference that might bridge the gap between maker and mediator. Tucker's comments, lamenting the condition of criticism, revealed the divergence of interests between certain groups of practicing artists and those involved in publishing criticism. His criticism of *Studio*, that the roles of artist and critic have become conflated, is partly a complaint about the way in which critics and editors had begun to side with particular avant-garde developments both within the British art scene as well as promoting *avant-garde* artists from America and Europe, further distancing them from a more local community of practitioners.

³⁰⁹ Forge, 'Forces against Object-Based Art', p. 35.

³¹⁰ A term echoing Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', which had only recently appeared in English: Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Brewster, Ben (London: NLB, 1971).

³¹¹ Forge, 'Forces against Object-Based Art', p. 35.

It was already clear by 1971 that *Studio* was offering a substantial platform to artists outside of the English artschool circles, especially in its coverage of American minimalists and conceptualist artists. Meanwhile, the young new newspaper critics were directing their attentions in a similar direction.

Tucker's and Forge's complaints intuited the risk of conflating thinking with making, or ideas with experience. If *Studio*, the emblematic publication of modern art in Britain, had become a vehicle for artists making art that only needed to occupy the space of the magazine, an alternative would have to be found.

Although Tucker continued to find a platform for his writing on modern sculptors in *Studio*, the magazine had throughout 1971 turned increasingly to coverage of American minimalist and conceptual art, as well as giving prominent coverage to British experimental artists. According to Martin, he and Tucker had been discussing what they considered the need for a different venue for criticism intermittently since 1968. But in 1972, Tucker told Martin that the art collector, construction magnate (and future Tory party treasurer) Alistair McAlpine has offered to put money behind an art publication. Following discussions between Martin, Tucker and McAlpine, Martin agreed to take the role of editor, as long as he was given complete editorial independence. This also meant refusing to seek advertising as income for the magazine.

McAlpine's intervention is interesting in the context of the growing disenchantment with sculpture. In early 1971 it had been announced that McAlpine was to donate a large group of sculptures to the Tate Gallery.³¹² The donation was exhibited in July of 1971, and comprised 59 works by 'New Generation' sculptors (David Annesley, Michael Bolus, Philip King, Tim Scott, Tucker, William Turnbull and Isaac Witkin). The Tate exhibition was met with little enthusiasm, with the Times's Paul Overy summing up much of the growing animosity towards sculpture:

Artists are now increasingly turning away from the idea of the finished art object, of the kind that can only be displayed in a museum or a rich man's house. There is already something anachronistic about these huge and cumbersome works, static, finished and unchanging. That they were bought by one of the few men to collect contemporary art on a large scale in Britain (they can be numbered on the fingers of one hand) and now given to the

³¹² 'Sculpture Collection given to Tate', *The Times* (London, 5 January 1971), p. 9.

Tate, is not without significance. They seem like a last, desperate challenge to the conventional idea of the patron.³¹³

By 1972, the reputation of the New Generation sculpture, and a particular generation of British sculpture more broadly, was receiving increasingly lukewarm and ambivalent responses from artists, the critics and the public, sapping the reputation of previously well-established artistic tendencies. Large-scale exhibitions were staged, only to meet with restless indifference. The summer and autumn of 1971 had seen the ambitious, but poorly received Arts Council national survey show *Art Spectrum*, whose London section was staged at Alexandra Palace for three weeks in August.³¹⁴ *Art Spectrum's* London section, organised by the newly formed Greater London Arts Association (GLAA), comprised over 100 artists, ranging widely across the different artistic tendencies then current in London. The GLAA's visual arts panel included *Studio's* editor Peter Townsend, Forge and Tim Hilton, soon to take over as assistant editor at *Studio*. Its selection panel included artist Stuart Brisley, and three gallerists Victor Musgrave, John Dunbar and Annely Juda. But while it offered a sprawling and pluralistic view of the London scene, the response to *Art Spectrum* was indicative of the growing tension between alternative practices and the more established object-based art, a question which mostly drew criticism of the poor arrangement of so many works in such a vast space, and which nodded to the growing sensitivity to issues of exhibition context and artworks which were themselves site-specific. For Nigel Gosling, 'one of the difficulties of contemporary art is that it uses so many conflicting idioms that no single environment can hold it: hence the reasonable complaint that many modern art-activities are excluded from existing galleries and museums'.³¹⁵ Guy Brett, a greater advocate of such activities, concurred that 'the works of artists ... are no longer self-contained entities that can be carried around and simply put on exhibition'.³¹⁶

³¹³ Paul Overy, 'A Glutton for Colour', *The Times* (London, 13 July 1971), p. 7.

³¹⁴ *Art Spectrum* consisted of seven regional programmes; four in England, alongside shows in Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It ran at various venues from 27 May to 31 October.

³¹⁵ Nigel Gosling, 'Palace Pudding', *The Observer* (London, 15 August 1971), p. 22.

³¹⁶ Guy Brett, 'Exhibition Full of Contradictions', *The Times* (London, 12 August 1971), p. 7.

1972 had started with the Royal Academy's survey show *British Sculptors '72*, curated by sculptor Bryan Kneale with a catalogue written by Bryan Robertson.³¹⁷ In her review Caroline Tisdall would remark indifferently that *British Sculptors '72* was 'a pleasant ramble through a number of styles current in British sculpture over the past decade',³¹⁸ while Brett continued his criticism of the problem of site-specificity in exhibition, this time reversing the problem by complaining that Caro's much-celebrated rejection of the plinth paradoxically 'encouraged sculpture dependent on a kind of ideal neutral, white room,' rooms which 'can only really exist in galleries and museums'. 'In a sense,' Brett suggested, 'they are a refuge from the immense problems of finding a meaningful existence for sculpture in public places.'³¹⁹

The 'immense problem' of sculpture's public significance was of course what Tucker had lamented those years earlier in his article for *Studio*. The concept of positive civic value of public sculpture, it being an art-form with a particular tie to the public realm, came up against the problem of the specialised, introspected discourses of its practitioners. Robertson was similarly anxious about the purpose of sculpture, finding the conditions of its presentation to be the problem, writing in his catalogue essay that 'London is not well-off for galleries with areas large enough to accommodate indoor sculpture on the scale that is being practiced today.'³²⁰ Robertson further lament the abandonment of the sculpture shows that had been staged in Battersea Park periodically from 1948 to 1966, under the auspices of the Arts Council and the Greater London Council.³²¹ If sculptors were increasingly nervous about the legitimacy for sculpture's claim to be addressing a public, this would be starkly confirmed by the reception to Peter Stuyvesant Foundation-sponsored project of public site sculptural commissions held in England and Wales that summer. The City Sculpture Project, developing out of the Arnolfini Gallery's 'New British Sculpture/Bristol' project of 1968 and led by the

³¹⁷ Robertson's 'New Generation' shows of the early 1960s, while he was director of the Whitechapel Gallery, had been key to establishing the profile of the St Martins sculptors.

³¹⁸ Caroline Tisdall, 'Stalking Horses at Piccadilly's Bastille', *Guardian* (London, 7 January 1972), p. 8.

³¹⁹ Guy Brett, 'Sculpture at RA: New and Dispiriting', *The Times* (London, 7 January 1972), p. 7.

³²⁰ Bryan Robertson, 'Introduction', in *British Sculptors '72* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1972).

³²¹ For an account of the public reception of the Battersea Park sculpture exhibitions see Ch. 6 in Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public, 1747-2001* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Arnolfini's director Jeremy Rees, commissioned seventeen new works for sites in eight cities, and was co-selected by 'New Generation' sculptor Philip King. Making the link between *British Sculpture '72* and the forthcoming City Sculpture Project, Tucker continued to incite the problem of sculpture's paradoxical public status, writing that 'The nature of [recent] sculpture, its essential privateness, was misinterpreted both by those genuinely eager to gain acceptance for it and by some artists themselves, as signalling a return to a bland, heroic and monumental public art'.³²²

Tucker's misgivings were justified. Sculpture City Project was not a success. Alongside a section featuring the commissioned sculptures, *Studio* published an eight-page 'scrap-book' of cuttings from regional newspapers covering the project, assembling letters from the public and editorial commentary, most of it hostile to the sited works, or reporting the cases of vandalism of works by Barry Flanagan and L. Brower Hatcher.³²³ Brett, commenting on the project's reception, noted how 'the scheme as a whole has bulldozed ahead without explaining itself and without really investigating the problems, the relationship between private and public.' But, argued Brett, "'Public" is not synonymous with the city square, which is often a cold place. It is more an attitude of mind, a social relationship.'³²⁴

The Peter Stuyvesant Foundation had been a sponsor of the 'New Generation' shows at the Whitechapel Gallery under Robertson, and McAlpine had been one of their biggest collectors. So McAlpine's gift to the Tate was, as Overy had pointed out, also a headstone for a decade: with it McAlpine effectively withdrew from collecting modern art, though not from attempting to influence the cultural scene, as his support for *ONE* suggests. *ONE* was not McAlpine's only deployment of resources in the London art world during the period; from 1974 he financed the experimental exhibition and event venue Art Net, run by Archigram's Peter Cook (after Cook had left the directorship of the ICA at the end of 1973), which ran until 1977.³²⁵

³²² William Tucker, 'Notes on Sculpture, Public Sculpture and Patronage', *Studio International*, January 1972, 9.

³²³ Jeremy Rees, 'Public Sculpture {Peter Stuyvesant Foundation City Sculpture Project}', *Studio International*, July 1972, 10–44.

³²⁴ Guy Brett, 'More than the Monument in the Piazza', *The Times* (London, 12 September 1972), p. 10.

³²⁵ See Paul Overy, 'Writing on the Wall', *The Times* (London, 5 July 1977), p. 13.

So in an atmosphere of growing antipathy towards a derided formalism, *ONE* attempted to create a venue for the conditions of an ideal critical encounter with art, lodged in the exchange between visual experience and written articulation. But to do so meant confronting the very real problems of a critical perspective that, having found itself comfortably authoritative for too long, discovered that it had to remake the case for its particular way of seeing, even as it insisted on shutting out much of what was going on in art at the time.

Reading *ONE*, then, offers a rarefied and partial view of a period in an artistic culture. The pitfalls of insularity are all too apparent, as writers attend to a tiny grouping of living artists; a preoccupation with historical continuity and the excavation of antecedents is constant, as articles take up historical subjects from Brancusi to Joseph Cornell to Russian Constructivism to the Cork Street gallery scene of the 1950s; in its attention to institutions, it is interested in those places of authority and validation – the Hayward Gallery or the Royal Academy or the Rijksmuseum – while making a point of republishing letters critical of newspaper critics its contributors see as part of the problem (John Hoyland criticizing Caroline Tisdall, Basil Beatty attacking Richard Cork); and the questions and problems surrounding art education are turned over continuously.

In its stated ambition to reform art criticism, *ONE* yielded limited and partial results. The language and frameworks of attention one finds in the articles on artists remain fixed in the preoccupations of formalist attention and a vague and unexamined of expressivity, while any broader critical justification for these remains, by and large, hazy and detached. Nevertheless, Tucker's article 'Morality and Criticism', published in the first issue, invoking the example of the recently deceased critic Adrian Stokes,³²⁶ attempts to make an argument for the connection between aesthetic form as a register of the expression of human experience with art criticism. As Tucker put it, 'what is needed now is a great cry of affirmation of the fundamental primacy in terms of feeling of the formal structure of art: and of the necessity that the quality of expression in art criticism should seek to rival that of the work itself.'³²⁷ What this might mean in practice, Tucker did not further elaborate in the pages of *ONE*.

³²⁶ See Adrian Stokes, *The Image in Form : Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes*, ed. by Richard Wollheim (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

³²⁷ William Tucker, 'Morality and Criticism', *ONE*, October 1973, p. 7.

The reference to the publication of Stokes's writings points to a complex problem at work in Tucker's position and in other writing that appeared in *ONE*. Connecting 'feeling' with 'formal structure', while proposing a relationship of equivalence between the critical text and the work, implied a particular emphasis on subjective value that was distinct from the more disembodied and apparently objective tendency to be found in the orthodoxy of American-inspired formalist criticism. If Tucker could round on the increasing interchangeability of artwork and critic, it was to attempt to reassert a particular relationship between the artwork and critical writing, in which what was written was the evidence of the writer's attention to his own response to the work (rather than the stated intentions of the artist), while seeking to universalize the significance of such response by asserting the recognition of fundamental principles. For Stokes, this relationship had led him to a psychoanalytical reading of sculpture and painting, though Tucker never resorted explicitly to psychological or psychoanalytical terms.

For the writers who published in *ONE*, the question of subjective experience proved to be a kind of blind spot. Those articles which stand as conventional reviews are in many ways the least interesting, not because of the narrow focus on the painters and sculptors which the magazine chose to support, but more importantly because the critical language used remained stuck in a peculiarly constrained critical vocabulary and form of attention that had become familiar in discussions of constructed sculpture and abstract painting. Close descriptions of surfaces and forms rarely offer any more general justification for why the viewer should pay attention to these, though often a sort of phenomenological pleasure-as-justification is implied: Terence Maloon concludes that Olitski's paintings 'excite [the grey of a painting] in sparks of affinity, and heighten our impression of amplitude, fecundity and generation.'³²⁸ How is not explained, but why this should be a good thing is implied. Valued qualities in paintings by John Hoyland (reviewed both by Maloon and Peter Edwards) are 'the expulsion of illusory space' or 'an intense physical presentness'.³²⁹ Analogies for power and potency circulate – for Edwards 'Colours co-exist under pressure and we experience the tensions that give the paintings their strength and unity', while for Maloon the surface of a successful Hoyland painting has been 'mauled', the colours 'pungent' and 'toothsome', Hoyland's paintings being 'roughed up, tensed vital creatures'. Negative values,

³²⁸ Terence Maloon, 'Olitski: A Seeing and Unseeing', *ONE*, October 1973, p. 10.

³²⁹ John Edwards, 'Two Aspects of John Hoyland: 1st Aspect', *ONE*, January 1974, pp. 4–6.

meanwhile, are paint described as 'a deliquescent confectionary goo, a 'frightful vestige of the Boudoir'.³³⁰ Masculine and feminine traits, perhaps, though never explicitly considered as such, or indeed considered in any terms. Such expressive descriptive language loaded the artwork with an agency and life that it couldn't, in any real sense, possess. Yet the subjective position from which this was projected remained out of view.

If intimations of feeling, gesture and emotion fringed *ONE*'s discussions of painting, its deliberation of sculpture remained largely contained to issues of composition, relation, balance, gravity and structure which firmly suppressed any subjective investment, in deference to a more regulated, objective range of verifiable criteria. Little of the writing in *ONE* sought to examine its own terms, most of it remaining focussed on providing legitimation for its small coterie of British artists, in the face of the perceived influence of American art and American criticism, embodied particularly by Clement Greenberg. There are some rare moments of speculative writing, notably that of Maloon who, alone in the magazine, was able to identify, even obliquely, the problematic significance of language in the activity of attending to artworks. For example, in his article 'Symbolist Aesthetics', Maloon noted that '[Paul] Valery's notion of the poem as an algebraic formula has been taken over by present-day Structural linguistics and structural anthropology.'³³¹

To admit to the currency of a theory of language in *ONE* stands as an exception. But it was, in a sense, a theory of language that *ONE* needed, or rather, some attempt to make sense of the mobile relationship between sense experience and conceptual attention, mediated by language. Yet as a defensive reaction to the swift decline in the fortunes of the art it championed, *ONE* could only establish a limited space to develop that discussion. The artists and individuals that gathered around Martin's magazine was too selective, and the critical defence of painting and sculpture was confused with a defence of institutional territory, as the commercial art market faltered and all artists became more dependent on, and competitive over, the space provided by the art world's public institutions. Faced with the ferocious theoretical claims of much post-conceptualist, left-wing and feminist critiques of subjectivity and ideology that were then emerging, *ONE*'s task maybe have only been to hold

³³⁰ Terence Maloon, 'Two Aspects of John Hoyland: 2nd Aspect', *ONE*, January 1974, pp. 6–8 (p. 8).

³³¹ Terence Maloon, 'Symbolist Aesthetics', *ONE*, November 1974, pp. 14–17.

the line, but this appears to have made the internal deliberation on certain key problems that many artists *did* want to broach all the more difficult.

Yet *ONE* nevertheless functioned as a focal point for the community of artists who were disconcerted by the editorial shifts in *Studio* and the increasingly polemical agendas of the left-leaning newspaper critics. In that milieu, and by the time *ONE* was established, Martin had come into contact with two younger artists, Ben Jones and James Faure Walker. Faure Walker had studied at St Martins from 1966 to 1970, going on to complete an MA at the Royal College of Art between 1970 and 1972, where he was dismayed by the Marxist and sociological approaches to art that held sway, finding that few were interested in his study of eighteen-century aesthetics. Sculptor Jones had also studied at St Martins, and knew Faure Walker when in the same studio block in north London. There, the pair instituted, along with other likeminded artists, regular studio discussion groups and visits to established artists in their studios, modelled on the 'crits' that were an established feature of the teaching at St Martins.³³²

Faure Walker, like Martin, had contributed reviews to *Studio International*. Jones had contributed to the fifth issue of *ONE*, published in November of 1974,³³³ and the three artists appear to have shared similar circles of acquaintance. The older abstract painter Albert Irvin, for example, was the first artist to present in the studio crit visits, and would also contribute to *ONE*.³³⁴ Certainly, Faure Walker, Jones and Martin were involved in a community of painters and sculptors in London who shared similar preoccupations about developments in art both in terms of art criticism and the broader institutional context facing practicing artists. It is interesting here to note how the preoccupations regarding the politics of gallery presentation evident in *ONE* were carried through into Martin's other activities, particular Martin's hand in the so-called 'Victoria Pub' meetings, held in London in early 1975. These two meetings had brought together a sizeable group of artists, including many of the sculptors and painters associated with British formalist sculpture and abstract painting (among these John Hoyland, William Tucker, William Turnbull, Gillian Ayres, Basil Beattie and Bernard Cohen), as well as other artists and figures who had been covered in *ONE*. The meetings are principally interesting for the letter of petition that resulted, signed by Martin and

³³² James Faure Walker, Interview, 2011.

³³³ Ben Jones, 'Colour and Surface in Sculpture', *ONE*, November 1974, pp. 24–25.

³³⁴ Albert Irvin, 'Remarks', *ONE*, July 1974, p. 22.

52 other signatories including Faure Walker, addressed to the Director of Exhibitions at the Arts Council, and making two demands: 'that part of the Hayward gallery should be given over to the continuous showing of paintings and sculpture by artists living and working in this country. Second, that there should be an annual exhibition of paintings and sculpture by artists living and working in this country at the Hayward and Tate galleries.'³³⁵

As the letter testily declared, 'these proposals constituted a direct criticism of Arts Council policy towards painting and sculpture'. It is perhaps a sign of the Arts Council's sensitivity of the issue of the fair representation of different interests, as well as the reputational influence of some of the signatories, that the letter received a swift reply. Reporting on the Art panel's meeting, Andrew Dempsey noted the panel's agreement that there should 'an annual exhibition of contemporary British art at the Hayward,' while acknowledging the need for 'the continual display of recent work in a part of the Hayward'.³³⁶ The Arts Council would inaugurate the Hayward Annual in 1977, as a broad survey show that included both the older generation of British painters and sculptors, and artists associated with conceptual art, video and performance art. In terms of its plurality, the first Hayward Annual conceded a problem that had been in evidence since *The New Art* in 1972. Having already then asserted the principle of a biennial exhibition of contemporary artistic activity as part of its exhibitions policy, this nevertheless translated into a pattern of exhibitions that had the effect of segregating developments in contemporary practice: after the *The New Art* had showcased conceptualist, performance, and film and video practice, the Hayward's 1974 'biennial' survey show, *British Painting '74* (organised by Andrew Forge), focused exclusively on painting.³³⁷ This was followed in the Spring of 1975 by Tucker's own curatorial essay *The Condition of Sculpture*, which drew poor reviews, with Overy dismissing the show's 'almost unremitting mediocrity', while Richard Cork, writing in the *Evening Standard*, observed that 'far

³³⁵ Barry Martin, 'Letter to the Arts Council of Great Britain', 23 May 1975, Archive of Barry Martin.

³³⁶ Andrew Dempsey, 'Letter to Barry Martin', 12 June 1975, Archive of Barry Martin. Dempsey was assistant director of exhibitions, under Norbert Lynton.

³³⁷ In their catalogue preface, Robin Campbell and Norbert Lynton remark that '...the series [of biennial Hayward surveys] reflects debates and disagreements both about the validity of large, mixed exhibitions and about the various ways in which exhibitions devoted to contemporary British art might be arrived at.' See

too many of the works displayed here show signs of a tradition in decline rather than in full bloom'.³³⁸

Martin recalls that he had indicated to Jones and Faure Walker that he was going to bring *ONE* to an end early in 1975. The title would wind up with its sixth issue in May that year. Jones and Faure Walker were equally frustrated with developments in conceptual and politically-driven art, and by the end of 1975 they had set up, with Faure Walker's wife Caryn and the art historian Brandon Taylor, the magazine *Artscribe*, its first issue appearing in January 1976. As Martin would record later, Faure Walker and Jones had asked him 'to consider joining *One* with the yet-to-be-published *Artscribe*', but he had declined, wanting to concentrate on his own work, although he contributed articles to the first few issues.³³⁹

The alignment between *ONE* and *Artscribe*, while little acknowledged, is surprisingly evident in *Artscribe*'s inaugural issue. Jones's first editorial note contains an unaccredited borrowing of a line from Tucker's line 'Morality and Criticism' article that had appeared in the first issue of *ONE*:

ARTSCRIBE supports the fundamental primacy in terms of feeling of the formal structures of art and of the necessity that the quality of expression in art criticism should seek to rival that of the work itself.³⁴⁰

'ARTSCRIBE', the editorial declared, 'does not endorse the rationale of an art to illustrate a social or psychological thesis'. Further, 'ARTSCRIBE acknowledges the precedence of the art object and would not want to separate the ideas and intention of the artist from the experience of the work itself.'

These were tangled claims, which were not to be quickly resolved in *Artscribe*'s early issues, and it is worth examining the magazine's initial editorial approach during 1976. *Artscribe*'s first few issues are a mix of interviews with artists and reviews of exhibitions, leavened with articles hostile to developments in art associated with conceptualism, including satirical pieces lampooning familiar figures in what the magazine perceived to be the new art establishment. *Artscribe*'s schoolboy humour takes pot shots at the likes of Carl Andre ('Ed Block talks to Don Ballast'), the critic Marina Vaizey (transformed into 'Farina Maizey'), while a report

³³⁸ Paul Overy, 'Very Flat, Sculpture', *The Times* (London, 4 June 1975), p. 12; Richard Cork, 'A Narrow View of Sculpture', *London Evening Standard* (London, 5 June 1975).

³³⁹ See Barry Martin, 'The Surface before Artscribe', *Art Monthly*, March 1980, p. 12.

³⁴⁰ Ben Jones, 'Editorial Note', *Artscribe*, January 1976, p. 4.

of an installation at the Tate Gallery by 'Don Headacher and Don Witless' are a thinly disguised John Stezaker and Stephen Willatts. Such comic mockery wasn't without context: February 1976 was marked by the publicity surrounding the 'Tate bricks' controversy, in which the Tate's display of Andre's *Equivalent VIII* became an object of ridicule for the tabloid press. While *Artscribe's* editors may have been reacting to what they saw as the dominance in the official art world of post-conceptualist activity, it was a dominance which would soon begin to be undermined by changes in the political and cultural context in Britain, in which the liberal and radical cultures that had enjoyed attention in the years from 1972 would come under increased attack by a resurgent cultural conservatism that anticipated the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979.

In similar vein to *ONE*, *Artscribe's* first issues are a mix of reviews, articles on art education and art funding, as well as lengthy interviews with the senior figures of British painting and sculpture: issue 1 features Albert Irvin, followed in subsequent issues by pieces on Patrick Heron, William Tucker and Bernard Cohen. While supportive, these interviews did the work, unwittingly perhaps, of exposing the limitations and failures of these by-now aging figures. The figure of the artist-as-critic is one of the casualties of this; the extensive interview with Patrick Heron turns on the troublesome dynamic of being an artist and writing critically about others. And while Heron's obsessive preoccupation with his own historical significance and the distortions of the historical record of abstract art tends to dominate the discussion (Heron had long railed against what he saw as the unjustified celebration of the American Abstract Expressionists over their British counterparts), the (possibly irreconcilable) tension between writing and the experience of the object is never far from the surface:

James Faure Walker: But one of the things that come through in your own writing is a curious type of conflict because although you write because you feel strongly about things, what you write is very much against the idea of criticism.

Patrick Heron: Yes. I use words to demolish the status of words. I've said that before: I think it's a legitimate point of view to hold.

Brandon Taylor: Do you? I find it rather contradictory. It must be a very difficult position to maintain, to think that words smother optical

experience, at the same time as using words to advance the proposition that words shouldn't be used.³⁴¹

So while the older generation of British painters and sculptors could expect sympathetic exposure in *Artscribe*, this support was not unqualified, and the generational difference of its younger editors meant that a new generation of artists would begin to be addressed: issue 1, for example, carries alongside the Irvin interview a halting but inquisitive and sympathetic interview by Jones with performance and installation artist Marc Camille Chaimowicz. The orthodoxies of earlier sculpture, in particular, received sceptical treatment in early issues of *Artscribe*. Edward Sharp, writing of younger sculptors working in the tradition of 'St Martins' constructed sculpture, could observe that 'it is as if the vision of what sculpture has to offer had slipped away somewhere. That the exhausted use of constructed steel and the introspective views of the younger sculptors had contributed to a largely defensive and mannered style.'³⁴²

Such criticism was reformist rather than radical. Nevertheless, it still meant that established positions could be subject to scrutiny. Having established general support for art whose value was in form and visual experience, *Artscribe* would have to test what this would mean in detail. Having essayed his criticisms of constructed sculpture and turn to polychrome sculpture in *ONE*, Jones continued to search for terms for sculpture that would give it a more grounded meaning in human experience. For Jones this meant a return to questions of emotion and expression. In 'Sculpture, Tonality And Emancipation', Jones argued against the constructed sculpture of the preceding decade:

The prevailing drive of sculptors for the concrete and for absolute clarity of statement has excluded so much that is human. The only values that can make a work of art outstanding are emotive *and* sensory, the exclusion of feeling from expression and subject from material castrates their art. There is an over-balance of analytical thought at the expense of feeling, to such an extent that, largely because of its expressionistic association, polychrome and surface has been played down and muted by sculptors themselves.³⁴³

³⁴¹ 'Interview with Patrick Heron', *Artscribe*, Spring 1976, pp. 2-3.

³⁴² Edward Sharp, 'Metal Manners', *Artscribe*, February 1976, p. 5.

³⁴³ Ben Jones, 'Sculpture, Tonality and Emancipation', *Artscribe*, Summer 1976, p. 7.

Jones goes on to sketch out an argument in which polychrome sculpture, with its internal relations of difference, becomes an analogue for a positive form of individualism, in which 'it might be seen that arrangements of self structuring colours with the sculpture can suggest how individual scan strive for and achieve autonomy within the social fabric.'³⁴⁴

Jones's argument may be rudimentary, but it indicates the way in which *Artscribe's* artistic preferences could not be detached from some broader conception of how artists related the activity of art to its social and cultural context. Evidently Jones's position reiterates a familiar commitment in modernist art to the residual freedom and autonomy obtained in individual artistic practice, a commitment that had by then been subject to sustained criticism. But it would be simplistic to dismiss the position taken by the writers in *Artscribe* as merely a belated, defensive repetition of that compromised question. *Artscribe's* remit is clearly 'conservative' in the sense that it seeks to reserve a space for an art of visual form, but while there are clearly various territorial interests vested in this, it is also evident that those artists and practices are not above critical scrutiny, while examples such as the Chaimowicz interview suggest an openness to other forms of activity not strictly tied to the conventions of sculpture and painting. Jones's interest in Chaimowicz's work is understandable in the context of *Artscribe's* interest in art whose material is visual, and through which means the possibility of expressivity and emotional content was apparent.

But the defence of a certain kind of individual experience is in *Artscribe* must perhaps also be understood for its particular investment in the relationship between criticism and practice, since it was, initially, a magazine created and written by practicing artists. As in the case of *ONE*, *Artscribe* emerged from a circle of artists who turned their hand to writing about art in reaction to the critical writing which dominated the other outlets for critical writing, principally, at this time, the broadsheet newspaper critics and the dominant position held by *Studio International*. This self-initiated aspect of the original structure of *Artscribe* is easily overlooked, especially since the magazine was to change quickly in organisational form when, with the sixth issue in 1977, it relaunched as a more substantial and professionally produced magazine backed by the powerful London gallery Waddington & Tooth.

³⁴⁴ Jones, 'Sculpture, Tonality and Emancipation'.

The relationship between artwork and critical commentary, and the artist and the critic is not, in other words, an abstract or purely discursive matter, but is imbedded in practical and institutional divisions that may privilege certain forms of relation between artwork and commentary over others. *Artscribe's* resentment towards the way in which conceptual art and other developments had come to take prominence in the institutional landscape of art in Britain is palpable, but what is interesting is how this resentment produces a sort of analysis of the dynamic between artwork, commentary and institutional mediation. In his polemical article 'A.D.', Faure Walker was responding to the British Council exhibition 'Arte Inglessi Oggi 1960-76', being staged in Milan that year, taking issue with the way in which the catalogue had been partitioned into two volumes, one for painting and sculpture, the other covering what Richard Cork termed, in his catalogue essay, 'Alternative Developments'.³⁴⁵ Critical of the ambiguous valorisation of the term 'alternative developments', Faure Walker's complaints reworked Tucker's old attack on *Studio*:

A.D. [Alternative Developments] has shown that the true medium of successful contemporary art is publicity, and that the requisite artistic respectability is conferred by the art historian and not the critic. Having abandoned – or claimed to have abandoned – direct visual means for making their point, having put and embargo on 'formalism', the A.D. artists require sympathetic third parties between their work and the viewer to describe it and make it seem important. The middle-man helps the artist in his project of educating society. A 'unique' painting addresses itself only to the individual, who has to witness it with his own eyes – society, history don't come into it so much. Provided the publicity channels are kept open, each further product of the A.D. school can be faithfully documented and pass immediately into art history without passing through the filter of criticism. No-one need see it.

Blunt as it is, Faure Walker's jeering criticism exploits the anxiety that the development of much non-orthodox artistic practice had come to depend on a changed configuration of the relationship between discourse and practice, in which artistic intention was privileged over speculative or reflective activity of the effects

³⁴⁵ This segregation of tendencies would be repeated in the inaugural Hayward Annual the following year, which ran as two separate consecutive sections, the first focused on painting and sculpture, the second on conceptual and other 'alternative' practices.

of a work, and in which the meditative or interrogative role of criticism appeared to be suspended. The programmatic aspects of anti-formalist practice, its commitment to conceptual interrogation of the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the object of art, its didactic and pedagogical agendas, had no need of the interlocution of critical reflection.

But Faure Walker's evaluative 'filter of criticism' is really a projection, onto the site of public discourse, of an idealised encounter between an individual and a work; or to be more precise, between an individual *artist* and *his* work. This binary relationship can of course be repeated and extended to represent a community of artist-as-critics, for as long as the participants all share a similar implication and shared commitments to both artistic practice and critical reflection. It is this idealised version of an artistic community which is threatened by an art which operates programmatically, or which institutes an analytical revision of foundational principles by which the object of inquiry is defined. If much of the antagonism one finds both in *ONE* and the early *Artscribe* is directed towards institutions and critics, this is due to the perception (justified, as it happened) of the breakdown of the circularity of relations assumed to exist between artist, critic, teacher, student and the various institutional platforms of gallery, museum and writing. As has been outlined in this chapter, the generational and institutional commitments of these artists were closely interconnected. And in the case of *Artscribe*, the pedagogical context of the art school becomes the basis of the editorial model of the magazine, as well as the implicit rationale for a model of art criticism based on the privileging of experience, and hostile to forms of theorisation that might not emerge from the site of original encounter, reflection and discussion. Or to put it another way, the formulation of criticism, based in individual responses formed in a community of practitioners, is a direct reflection of the pedagogical models that had so successfully operated in the art college context of St Martins, and which artists such as Faure Walker and Jones re-instituted in their day-to-day activity as practicing artists. Nor is it incidental that both magazines published regular articles on art education.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ It is worth noting that until 1970, St Martins College was not accredited to deliver the new Diploma in Art and Design qualification (Dip. AD), which had been established as a result of the 1960 report of the National Advisory Council on Art Education (the 'Coldstream Report').

Returning to the espousal of the term 'feeling', as it crosses through from Tucker's article in *ONE* to its reappearance in *Artscribe*, it becomes clear how this term came to reflect the condition of criticism as understood by a community of individuals whose professional investments were to be found in an established model art school pedagogy, in which practitioner and critic were understood as synonymous or interchangeable. Standing *against* theories of art but *for* criticism of it, both *ONE* and *Artscribe* alighted on a refusal to theorise prior to the event of experience, but then had to account for how to explain the experience of art as something other than inchoate or excessively subjective. This was not something that Martin's *ONE* had the critical resources to achieve, as its tendency to prefer returns to art historical material over critical review of contemporary activity would suggest. By contrast, *Artscribe*, less immediately committed to an older generation of artists and more preoccupied with the need to reassert some workable idea of critical criteria, while more openly in conflict with the 'alternative developments' that were by then current, was more prepared to theorise a relationship between the experience of artworks and the mediation of critical discourse.

Faure Walker had written his MA thesis on eighteenth-century aesthetics, and this no doubt informs his approach to what constituted the object of attention of art criticism in his polemics against 'alternative developments'. Bolstered by the 'Tate Bricks' controversy, by 1976 it was easier to take positions on how to resist the supposed vices of programmatic, theory and political-agenda driven art, and it the *Artscribe* group were keen to stage the debate publicly. Organised by Taylor, the conference *Art & Criticism* held at the A.I.R. Gallery in April 1976, brought together artists and critics of the London art scene, among them critics Richard Cork and Peter Fuller, artists Faure Walker, Stezaker, Tucker, John A Walker and David Medalla, gallerist Annely Juda and Caryn Faure Walker (at that time an officer at the Greater London Art Association). Taylor had organised the conference to 'revitalise general interest in the crucial and problematic role which writing plays in relation to the production and public reception of art'. As John A Walker remarked sardonically in his paper:

A few years ago it was the artists who was forever asking 'What is the essential nature of art? What is my function and role in society?' ... This infection of the art body has now spread to the meta-languages of art:

criticism is gripped by an identity crisis; it is the critics who continually asks himself 'What is my function and role in society?'³⁴⁷

Both Walker and Faure Walker could agree on the observer's mediation of the artwork, and of the place of critical discourse in forming a response to the artwork. Picking up on Roland Barthes's thesis that the work is completed by its reception by the reader or viewer, Walker is sensitive to the way in which a process of critical reflection is an integrated aspect of the production and reception of artworks, arguing that 'artists are, to a degree, critics: artist take part in criticism by making critical decisions during creation'.³⁴⁸ But he is also preoccupied with the contradictory character of the critic's special status as mediator, coming to the conclusion that critical practice should be continually be reintegrated into artistic practice, since it is apparent that in the case of 'eminent critics' (Walker points to Greenberg's example), the critic becomes instrumental in interpreting and evaluating art at the point at which the work enters into institutional validation. To counter this, Walker points to those artists whose practice aims to reclaim the act of critical validation from the institutional 'divisions of labour' in which the critic the gallery and the museum holds sway. Walker cites Stezaker, Victor Burgin, Art & Language and Joseph Kosuth as examples of this tendency, as well as noting how critics themselves have ceased their role as critics and integrated themselves in artistic practice (pointing to the example of Charles Harrison joining Art & Language³⁴⁹). Collaborative practice becomes the preferred mode; 'working with each other in a group would put the critic and the artist on an equal footing.'³⁵⁰

Walker's analysis sees the reclamation of critical practice by artists as an act of resistance against the institutional power of the specialist critic and the 'division of labour' between artistic production and criticism. In direct contrast, Faure Walker sees this same tendency as the seizure of institutional position by the artist, aided by complicit critics and other institutional actors, to the detriment of an ideal of a pluralist and provisional public space of deliberation. 'Criticism must be an act of dissent. It must opposed the institutionalised effort to cover up an artist's

³⁴⁷ John A. Walker, 'Criticism of Art, or Criticism for Art?', in *Art & Criticism : Proceedings of a Conference Held in London on 23rd and 24th April 1976*, ed. by Brandon Taylor (Winchester: Winchester School of Art Press, 1979), pp. 42–48 (p. 42).

³⁴⁸ Walker, 'Criticism of Art, or Criticism for Art?', p. 44.

³⁴⁹ Harrison had been assistant editor of *Studio International*, stepping down in November 1971 to become editor of *Art-Language*.

³⁵⁰ Walker, 'Criticism of Art, or Criticism for Art?', p. 48.

vulnerability,³⁵¹ he declares. Diametrically opposed, both commentators nevertheless recognise that art criticism is implicated, whether it acknowledges it or not, in a division of functions susceptible to the exercise of institutional power, in which both make claims for the corrective redistribution of critical mediation as a counter to that power.

Walker had cogently argued for the reintegration of critical practice into artistic practice, and yet this left him with the problem of what lay on the 'outside' of this ideally integrated practice. Abolishing the traditional division between artist and critic, 'a group comprised of individuals with a variety of skills and expertise could generate a series of related works varying in terms of their complexity, level and medium to cater for the needs of different audiences.'³⁵² In this more instrumental model, the art-critical collective's activity was directed towards the outside of the social world. With faint echoes of Marx, Walker concluded that:

The purpose of criticism is not to interpret art but to assist in changing it.
The purpose of art is not to interpret the world but to assist in changing it.
The art of criticism can never be a substitute for a critical and self-critical art.

Faure Walker, by contrast, was instinctively hostile to such instrumentalism, as is apparent in the anti-institutional posturing that runs through his paper. 'The main thing', he argued, 'is [for criticism] to stir things up, restore the chaos, knock down any edifices that try and hide it from view,'³⁵³ by which he meant the instrumental manipulation of artistic presentation by institutional interests favouring 'alternative developments'.

There is a self-serving aspect to Faure Walker's rhetoric, since it served *Artscribe's* purpose to turn criticism into an extra-institutional champion of dissent against the official sanctioning of artists and artworks. Yet the claim to making criticism a process external to the legitimating processes of institutions is not wholly opportunistic, but points to the cultural and political problems of programmatic artistic practice and its relationship to forms of public evaluation. While Walker's account of an integrated critical practice sees beyond the threshold of the art-

³⁵¹ James Faure Walker, 'Thoughts on Criticism', in *Art & Criticism : Proceedings of a Conference Held in London on 23rd and 24th April 1976*, ed. by Brandon Taylor (Winchester: Winchester School of Art Press, 1979), pp. 49–56 (p. 53).

³⁵² Walker, 'Criticism of Art, or Criticism for Art?', p. 48.

³⁵³ Faure Walker, 'Thoughts on Criticism', p. 52.

critical collective to a division of institutional labour that it sets itself in opposition to, Faure Walker's criticism also sees itself looking on from the outside, creating dissent against a supposed 'establishment'. Both project an institutional scene from which they stand as counter; neither can account for their own potential implication in institutional power, of being on the 'inside'. For Faure Walker, however, it would be impossible to acknowledge that an earlier set of critical and artistic interests might have held institutional power prior to the takeover of the 'alternative developments' he so decried, since to do this would be to admit the purely territorial nature of the claim to institutional representation. If art criticism could not easily be separated from such accusations of territorial interest, then its practice would have to be perpetually dissenting, stirring things up, continually dramatizing its outsider status.

Yet if this perpetual anti-institutional status was to be maintained, it would be at a certain theoretical cost. Faure Walker argues that 'it is more the business of criticism to destroy theories than set them up', and that 'we should tolerate a wandering unstructured discourse in criticism, and not dismiss it because it 'lacks system'.³⁵⁴ Rather than being driven by the systematic, comprehensive application of theory, then, the 'perceptive insights' that Faure Walker wanted to privilege in critical writing, were:

...like sudden flashes, when the pressure of thought breaks through an inhibiting concept, and some of the work, which had always been there but never noticed before, is seen for the first time... It's as if the continual forming and re-forming of sense in language suddenly coincides with the rhythm of perception. The language bears the imprint of the writer's consciousness – a consciousness that is always reflecting back on what has just been said. It reads as a living consciousness because it is in step with the reader's own present.³⁵⁵

Instead of any ordering principle or theoretical pretext that might govern or regulate the response to the artwork from 'outside' the work, criticism was always to be contingent, rooted in the experience of the viewer, rather than in the intentions of the artist. Here, meaning would be provisional, embedded in a constant oscillation between ordering and disordering of a 'raw' sense by cognition

³⁵⁴ Faure Walker, 'Thoughts on Criticism', p. 51.

³⁵⁵ Faure Walker, 'Thoughts on Criticism', p. 52.

unburdened by the demands of meta-critical generalisations or theoretical imperatives. Significantly, however, this also meant the abandonment of the more programmatic aspects of formalist criticism, with its historical imperatives and pseudo-objective criteria for critical attention.

Faure Walker's position aligned the provisional and the unsystematic with a privileging of an ethics of individual liberty, placing the priority on the side of the viewer and on an artwork removed from instrumental demands to exploit the site of its encounter for any programmatic end. The purpose of criticism, then, could never be dissociated from an ethical or social question of how the experience of and artwork should be validated by the institutional practice of criticism. The practice of critical evaluation would necessarily operate from a notional 'outside' distinct from artist and work, yet this outside could itself not lay claim to total institutional authority, or run the risk of appearing to claim the same authority that Faure Walker saw as having been usurped by the anti-formalist tendencies of 'alternative developments'. By rejecting the possibility of a programmatic, theory-based model of criticism, criticism might inoculate itself against the risks of its own institutional power. As we have seen in the passage from *ONE* to *Artscribe*, the experience of the challenge to their own institutional position provoked one generation of artists to attempt to reclaim some institutional territory through the establishment of a new vehicle for art criticism. In the case of *ONE*, the outcome was the defensive reassertion of certain critical programmes for painting and sculpture that had become established in the preceding decade, and an increasingly fractious and destructive attempt to bring these programmes to bear on contemporary production, while continuously harking back to art-historical roots of sculptural and painterly avant-gardes. *Artscribe*, by contrast, sought to qualify and contain the demands of programmatic criticism by turning to a model of criticism that was pluralistic, contingent and committed to the ambivalence of subjective reception. That it made this move was not merely an internal revision of the culture of modernist criticism, but was a reaction to the problem of criticism's authority as an aspect of institutional legitimation, during a period in which this legitimation had become a source of intense controversy and division.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have attempted to make an account of the complex and often fraught conditions in which art criticism was produced, at a moment when established perspectives on the nature of artworks and of human subjectivity came under sustained scrutiny, from artists working from inside the culture of contemporary art, and from fields of intellectual practice and political cultural that existed outside of it. By approaching the historical record of diverse publications, I have sought to explore the many contrasting, often confused and uncertain accounts of the value, role and purpose of contemporary art, as articulated in the forms of criticism given voice by publications which claimed to address and contest the significance of artistic practice in the public realm. Since art is rarely made without the potential of its public existence in mind – however small this intended public might be – the involvement of others in the formation of its significance is a constitutive aspect of its identity, and the organisation of the activity by which this significance is formed cannot be understood outside of the material contexts in which that takes place. The informal and contingent activity of dialogue and deliberation among a community becomes formalised in its publication, which accrues authority as a representation of that community's consensus, or else contests its authority by asserting a counter-address in the sphere of publication.

The culture of publication therefore reflects the stability of the consensus prevailing at a given moment, while the contestation of that consensus often takes shapes in publications outside of the existing venues. In examining the years from 1968, I have attempted to chart the appearance of such formations of counter-consensus, and the tensions and conflicts that occurred as established art critical discourses attempted to retain their control over the institutional forms of their public authority, while attending to how divergent accounts of art and human experience came to visibility in the existing public domain of art criticism. One significant aspect of this is how established platforms responded positively, at the end of the 60s, to incorporating new developments in art. As the discussion of *Studio International* under Peter Townsend in Ch.1 suggests, the acknowledgement of the increasingly diverse practices of contemporary art required an active editorial project to admit that diversity, providing the debates of relatively narrow artistic milieus with the authority of a substantial public platform. *Studio's* attention to by-then well-established developments in American art may have been

belated, but it was also timely in the sense of consolidating those with developments in Britain to shape a perception for its readership of the rapid transformation of current artistic practice. While, for a period the relationship of art to technology was a significant preoccupation, *Studio's* more decisive turn would be in the articulation of the question of post-object art, and the eclipse of techno-aesthetic debates in favour of the critical deliberation of art's ontological status.

But common to both of these strands of attention was the marginalisation of the critic as the authoritative voice of artistic judgement and first representative of a publication's editorial stand, as artists began to take space to express their critical positions without the critic's mediation. And while some artists limited themselves to elaborating the critical terms that informed their particular practice, others began to adopt the status of theorists for art in general.

Underlying this, as becomes apparent particularly in chapters 1 and 3, was the issue of criticism's professional *and* discursive redundancy. Professionally, critics expressed doubt over their role even while holding positions of substantial public influence. That professional disquiet, while not always substantially diagnosed by critics, nevertheless began to identify the contours of a problem which was not merely a dispute over who got to occupy the space of publication – artist versus critic. Here the question of language's intervention in the mediation of experience and the issue of the plural nature of subjectivity was broached, even if this was in often in the negative terms of the critic's lack of competence to speak. Critically, the experience of artworks which incorporated they own discursive parameters, short-circuiting the incorporation of language into the formation of significance of the work, presented a problem for critics who had previously brought those discursive parameters to that encounter.

Yet the closing out of the mediating critical text faced another challenge, this time with regards to the potential redundancy of the critical text as evidence of *reflective* activity; that is, of a moment in which subjective experience might be critically attentive to itself. This appears here as the turn to a rhetoric of *immediacy* among artists, particularly among sculptors, in which the presence and effect of the work might be so emphatic that it should require no reflective interrogation. Ironically, this privileging of the immediate over the discursive was present in aspects of formalist criticism too. But perhaps a more substantial root of this lay in the

experiential emphasis of the counterculture, which privileged sensory and subjective freedom and was suspicious of the authoritarian aspect of the deployment of language and rationalistic cognition.

The conflict between immediacy and mediation is, I would argue, a key aspect of the early crisis of art criticism in the professional circuits of the art world at the beginning of the 1970s. In this the practice of criticism comes to be seen to be intensely political, in the sense that the role of conventional criticism was seen increasingly as an expression of the bureaucratic authority of institutional power, regardless of whether this was the authority of the art market, or of American influence abroad, or of the class system at home.

The rebellion against institutional criticism therefore appears as part of the general challenge to institutional power that unfolded in wake of the student revolts and the increasingly militant response of the counterculture and the militant left, which in the early 70s engaged in energetic, if often fraught debate about the character of revolutionary change – whether its character should be a revolution in the mind or a revolution in the material organisation of society. As I explored in Ch.2, visual art criticism found a precarious existence in the alternative press, but while those already established within more orthodox art milieus floundered in that context, conceptualist artists and, importantly, other critics drawing on different theoretical currents began to carve out new approaches to art and visual culture.

The contrast between established and marginal publications in the study, however, brings into sharp focus the problem of how dissenting and radical positions gained authority through the advocacy of editors and critics seeking to address a national culture and public. Here the rapid institutionalisation of conceptualist and other counter-currents in artistic practice was the result of the liberal ethos in cultural matters which had prevailed among those in the cultural establishment in the 1960s, but this proved to be a fragile success. As the discussion of the milieus of *ONE* and *Artscribe* developed in Ch.4 suggests, the advocacy of radical art by public critics met with hostility among certain communities of artists excluded by this ‘takeover’. The overtly partisan position taken by Richard Cork in particular, highlights that critical preferences are not separable from a politics of the public sphere, and consensus could not simply be imposed by virtue of the professional status of the critic. Similarly, as I discussed with regards to the early career of Peter Fuller, the critical discourse associated with the New Left depended heavily on the

personal reputation – and credentials with the British media establishment – of a senior figure such as John Berger. The territorial character of the response of the ‘new conservatives’ discussed in Ch.4 is indicative of the fragmentation of constituencies and readerships which were not yet represented even in the accommodation of more mainstream publications to new developments. The shift from artistic practices oriented primarily on questions of art’s ontological status to those which increasingly prioritised the particularities of the subject is important here. While psychoanalytical criticism appearing in *Spare Rib* might seem distant from the concerns of *Artscribe*, both shared a concern with the locality of subjective experience and its reflection in formal and iconographic resources. The universalist claims of an older formalist art and criticism had, even in *Artscribe*, ceded ground to particularism.

The position of criticism, forced onto the defensive by the reclamation of critical writing by artists at the turn of the 1970s, then evolved as critics attempted to apply new methodological approaches to the artwork. This however reopened the question of the relative priority of criticism – supposedly turned towards the artwork and the individual subject – and theory – dealing with abstraction and generality. As I have noted throughout, the deployment of theoretical approaches continually encountered the task of accounting for particular artworks which were not necessarily expressions of the priorities of those approaches: programmatic art of whatever type, ensconced in its own critical or theoretical perspectives, remains immune to the demands of others. Similarly, the canonisation of what might be thought of as paradigmatic or exemplary practices in the decades since the 1970s might be understood as the relative authority of theory in the critical institutions of art, at the cost its withdrawal from the encounter with a wider public constituency beyond the bounds of the institution. Criticism, following from the arguments made in the introduction, might be understood as the provisional mediation of possible theoretical claims, tested against the particular instances of artworks. The institutionalisation of discourse, whether this appears ‘as’ theory, or as ‘criticism’, is in this regard always bureaucratic, regardless of its content.

In conclusion, I would suggest that the process of de-institutionalisation of criticism described in this thesis replaced a managed consensus with the opportunity for a multiplicity of critical encounters with artistic practice, drawing on diverging theoretical resources. Yet the underlying problem with those resources was their ambivalence towards the nature and status of subjective

experience. In the emphasis on the formation of subjectivity by discourse, the possibility of an active public, formed as much by disagreement as much as agreement, became attenuated, leading critics to abandon the idea that the public, in its generality, was worth addressing. Behind the changes in theoretical accounts of the subject lay the transition from materiality to textuality, which itself reflected the historical abandonment of the political contest over the material governance of society. Art criticism might appear to be only distantly related to such concerns, but its process is analogous to all processes in which the meaning of material reality is deliberated among subjects, a deliberation only meaningful if it implies the active capacity of those subjects to revise material reality in their general, and more common interest.

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